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Jeweler Lorenz Bäumer Unveils Qatar Boutique in Doha Oasis

The Paris-based jeweler also opened a design practice and will be making his first steps in the metaverse this year.

By **LILY TEMPLETON**
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A rendering of Lorenz Bäumer's Qatar store in the Doha Oasis complex. COURTESY OF MAISON BÄUMER
VENDÔME

PARIS— A decade after opening his namesake boutique on Place Vendôme, jeweler Lorenz Bäumer this month is setting up shop in Qatar.

A 2,100-square-foot space, located in the **Doha Oasis complex** in Doha, the Maison Bäumer Vendôme store is located a stone's throw from the entrance.

Its interior is all soft tones with a glint of warm metal and touches of purple velvet, as imagined by Bäumer along with decorator Hubert Le Gall and artist-designer Hervé van der Straeten for furniture.

Among its most striking features are the walls, carved to evoke the country's sand dunes with a glimpse of the Vendôme column and famous facades on the horizon, a landscape that seems to change thanks to variable lighting throughout the day.

And where there is sand, there is a beach hut, or rather the “Cabane du Créateur,” (or creator’s hut), a private salon that can be closed off for appointments with the designer, even when he’s not in town.

“It’s a surfer shack abandoned on a beach, a way to bring [a sense of] the intimate, the spontaneous here, as I have placed things I love all around – even those I can’t afford,” said Bäumer, who is a keen surfer himself.



Lorenz Bäumer COURTESY OF MAISON BÄUMER VENDÔME

Screens connect it to its counterpart in Paris, which was decorated with an ever-evolving assortment of tchotchkes that range from jewelry sketches and collectible photography to printouts and family souvenirs.

Opened in partnership with the Printemps department store, the Qatar store is the latest step in an ambitious growth strategy that was initiated with the January 2020 arrival of Cédric Aumonier as a partner in the company. He also serves as chief executive officer.

With his track record that includes a stint in private equity, heading the commercial side of Yves Saint Laurent Beauty at L’Oréal and over a decade growing trendy Miami-born retailer The Webster, Aumonier’s arrival was meant to enable Bäumer return his focus to creation by helping restructure the company.

The move proved particularly timely as the COVID-19 pandemic made agility a prerequisite to survival for many organizations.

Although declining to share specific figures, Aumonier said the company had broken even a year into their partnership, become “comfortably profitable” in 2021 and, with sales multiplied by four in 2022, will reach seven-figure profitability for the year for the first time its 30-year existence.

The immediate consequence of freeing the jeweler’s creativity is the launch of Bäumer Design, a practice that will concentrate on the projects and objects he designs for others, ranging from the ceremonial swords for members of France’s cultural academies and eyewear to vials for perfumes and spirits.

What attracts engineer-turned-designer **Bäumer** to object design is the quest to “challenge yourself, be different, try to create [something] good, beautiful and true,” he said.



The crystal flagon designed for Hennessy’s Paradis cognac. COURTESY OF HENNESSY & MAISON BÄUMER VENDÔME

“I like the idea of searching for a new answer to a challenge, to try to invest something that hasn’t been done before, that address a need as well as possible,” the designer continued, giving the example of the Guerlain Rouge G case he designed in

2005, with its integrated mirrors for easy application.

Most recently, his quest for a challenge has taken the shape of a limited-edition decanter set for Hennessy's exclusive Paradis vintage in honor of the NBA's 75th anniversary, modeled after a basketball right down to the dimpling of its surface and crafted by crystal specialist **Baccarat**.

The logical next step was expanding the retail footprint. In 2022 came the openings of corners in the Printemps flagship on Boulevard Haussmann in Paris and at the luxury Eden Rock hotel in St. Barths in November, followed by a display case at the Bristol on Rue Saint-Honoré in Paris. These come in addition to his presence on Place Vendôme, through his store and a display in the Ritz.

But while a Place Vendôme address spoke of Bäumer's jewelry credentials — he'd designed for Chanel and launched Louis Vuitton's **high jewelry** offering before striking out on his own — it "is limiting the access to the product," explained Aumonier.

Especially at a time when pandemic-battered consumers want to look at options on their home turf.

Qatar was then the ideal place to capitalize on relationships built through Bäumer's Parisian boutique with a clientele with an appetite "not so much for brands but [one] embodied by a designer, particularly for made-to-measure," according to the executive.

Bäumer and Aumonier are already eyeing new markets. While COVID-19 put paid to their China ambitions for the moment, they've picked up a pre-pandemic conversation with a partner in Japan and are considering the opportunity of Saudi Arabia.

As for the U.S., a long-game territory which currently accounts for 40 percent of the jeweler's clients and sees a three-times higher average spend, Bäumer and Aumonier are still weighing options, between working with a department store partner and going at it solo by 2024.

The latter is an option that would require funding, something Aumonier sees "happening [in time] but as late as possible," particularly since a partnership has the advantage of accelerating establishment thanks to on-the-ground market insight.



A basketball pendant necklace is among Bäumer's latest designs. COURTESY OF MAISON BÄUMER VENDÔME

There's yet another territory where Bäumer hopes to "write a new page in a universe [he] doesn't know yet": the metaverse.

A virtual reality experience will be the starting point, inspired by the giant geode amethyst that serves as a coffee table in Bäumer's Paris boutique. Blooming into a flower-like meteorite, it will scatter its precious petals on a virtual Place Vendôme where customers will collect them. Once minted, each non-fungible token will represent a 50,000-euro credit.

But don't expect a digital collectible that can be just flipped. Aumonier likened the experience to Bäumer selling one of his sketches, saying they "wanted it to be a physical experience and not be just hot air."

To avoid speculation, Aumonier revealed there would be contractual counterparts that matched the duration of ownership, starting with, say, a coffee-table tome autographed by the jeweler for those holding them for three months or a private dinner in the jeweler's chic surf shack for more than six months.

Wait a year or more and perhaps "something impossible" could happen, the pair said with a mischievous sparkle in their eye.