

# MONOCLE

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Bring online into line  
Gerbase, London

"We're starting to feel information fatigue," says Paula Gerbase, founder of womenswear label Gerbase. Launched in June, the London-based brand sells made-to-measure suits, knitwear and jewellery. "I'm craving a return to a sense of mystery. When everything is so readily available we lose a certain sense of expectation and curiosity." Gerbase knows about desirability: she's also the artistic director of British footwear label John Lobb and the founder of unisex brand 1205, which she closed in 2017 in the wake of the Brexit referendum result. Now she's back with her new label, which has fewer than 1,000 followers on Instagram and no website to speak of. And that's the point. "In today's over-stimulated world, being overexposed seems to be the only strategy that exists. I would gladly exchange hype for a return to a sense of mystique." Today e-commerce is a reality of running a brand but Gerbase is one of a handful of firms doing something different with their online presence. Parisian womenswear label CristaSeya operates its e-commerce site like a pop-up shop: it's only open for a handful

"I'm craving a return to a sense of mystery. When everything is so readily available we lose a certain sense of expectation and curiosity"

of days every season. "We don't have the desire to be sold everywhere and available all the time," says co-founder Cristina Casini. The brand's e-shop products are ready-made and ship straight away. The temporary format reduces the risk of overproduction and means the brand never goes on sale. "Like any young business, we are always busy. Running a physical or online shop 24/7 adds more work," says Casini. "But the pop-up experience allows us to be surprising." If used in a certain way, Instagram can be effective. New York's The Row has more than one million followers but, rather than clothes, its grid is a mood board of art and design. "A brand's aesthetic is so visible in the shop but how do you put that across without a physical space?" says Charlotte Lewis, founder of kaftan brand Ven Store. "Mood-boarding expresses the vision of a brand. You can say a lot without having to post three times a day. A brand doesn't have to shout the loudest to be noticed." — GC

PHOTOGRAPHER: Felix Oball, Brian Givolis, Laurent Gode



(1) Client fitting at Stöffa trunk show (2) Stöffa suede jacket (3) Trunk-show façade



**4**  
Do trunk shows, not runway shows  
Stöffa, New York

Catwalk shows and presentations held during fashion weeks can certainly create buzz around brands. Yet for many smaller players, trunk shows – roving, temporary by-appointment showrooms – are more effective (if not quite as glamorous). "A trunk show is more than a pure marketing exercise," says Agyesh Madan, co-founder of New York menswear brand Stöffa. "It's an opportunity for the client to interact with our team, as our product specialists can walk clients through the complete collection and fabrications." Stöffa is based in Manhattan but holds monthly trunk shows in London, as well as events in Paris, Stockholm, LA and San Francisco; most run for two to five days. "Technology has enabled our

business in so many ways but it can't replace the in-person experience," says Madan. "The trunk-show model has allowed us to engage clients who are not based in our home location." Trunk shows are a sensible model – for all types of brands, whether they specialise in made to measure or ready to wear – because brands can deal with end consumers directly and guarantee there is sufficient customer interest before committing to the event. Atelier Saman Amel is hosting its next show in New York and, as of July, was fully booked (with 25 to 30 appointments, the majority of which are likely to result in purchases). The Swedish brand works with a small property agent that sublets gallery spaces and conference rooms in London and New York to secure superior locations at good prices. "Classic tailors book a large room in a hotel but we want to have an environment that's more clean, more professional and more like a showroom," says co-founder Dag Granath. Atelier Saman Amel has a team of five; it sends along two members of staff to host each trunk event. "It's a cost, absolutely," says Granath. "But we've never had a trunk show that we didn't make quite a bit of money from." — jsw

