

# WWD



## Timeless Amber

Amber Valletta's eco-friendly collection for the Karl Lagerfeld brand focuses on classic styles that are planet-friendly.

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## Earth Lover

Ralph Lauren Fragrances' latest genderless scent, Polo Earth, stresses sustainability, from ingredients to packaging.

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## New Model

Marquee Brands CEO Neil Fiske talks about moving the brand marketing firm beyond its traditional licensing model.

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# Dream Wedding

New York Luxury Bridal Fashion Week is back and the styles for the 2023 season have a moody, ethereal and, of course, utterly romantic sensibility, as seen through an exclusive preview of gowns from the upcoming collections, like this brocade gown from Ines Di Santo, with a headpiece by Jennifer Behr, Alexis Bittar earrings and rings by Zaxie and Swarovski. *For more, see pages 7 to 37.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY KEVIN SINCLAIR  
STYLED BY ALEX BADIA



## BUSINESS

# Farfetch, Neiman's Take On U.S. Luxury

- CEOs José Neves and Geoffroy van Raemdonck on their new strategic partnership.

BY EVAN CLARK AND DAVID MOIN

**José and Geoffroy** are teaming up – and taking on the world's largest luxury market with a bricks-and-clicks approach to the U.S. aimed at catering to the retail expectations of the next generation.

Farfetch, led by founder, chairman and chief executive officer José Neves, plans to make an up to \$200 million minority investment in Neiman Marcus Group, where CEO Geoffroy van Raemdonck is looking to supercharge the retailer's digital and omnichannel evolution.

The arrangement will start with the "replatforming" of NMG's Bergdorf Goodman website and app, using Farfetch's technology to update and

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## BUSINESS

# Fashion World Ramps Up Ukraine Relief

- Images of the war-torn nation have prompted several fashion executives to take action.

BY ROSEMARY FEITELBERG

**Forty days** after Russia invaded Ukraine, representatives of the fashion industry are supporting or creating initiatives to try to help the country's designers and people.

A new e-commerce site that solely supports Ukrainian brands and designers quietly debuted Friday. AngelforFashion.com founder and chief executive officer and founder Jen Sidary became engrained in the Ukrainian fashion community while living in Kyiv during the pandemic. The Los Angeles-based executive presented the collections of six Ukrainian designers last month in New York that had been arranged prior to the Russian invasion through a grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development's Competitive Economy Program.

In a matter of three weeks, Sidary created the e-commerce site that features more than 700 items from 30 prominent designers. Her previous work experience,

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## BUSINESS

## Wells Fargo Takes More Cautious Stance on Retail

- Analysts at the bank said this is not the “fantastical and magical” setup we had expected.”

BY EVAN CLARK

The world is weighing in on retail.

And Wells Fargo, comparing company outlooks with broader trends in the consumer economy, decided to take a step back with a more cautious stance on consumer shares generally for now and downgrades for Ralph Lauren Corp., VF Corp. and The TJX Cos. Inc.

“Bigger picture, this is not the ‘fantastical and magical’ setup we had expected, and we now see ongoing macro concerns and negative revisions keeping our universe under pressure for the time being,” a group of Wells Fargo analysts, including Ike Boruchow, Kate Fitzsimons, Will Gaertner and Jesse Sobelson, said in analysis.

Accordingly, Wells Fargo is looking for 2022 earnings per share to come in 5 to 10 percent below current estimates on Wall Street.

And as the analysts cut their projections, they downgraded Ralph Lauren, TJX and VF to “equal weight” from “overweight.” The bank also became more “selective” in its stock recommendations and pointed to “a highly compelling 12-month risk/reward” at Tapestry Inc., Carpi Holdings, Under Armour Inc. and Nike Inc.

Last year, the fashion industry staged a dramatic rebound from the worst of the COVID-19 lockdowns – with many top companies crowing over their best year ever in the midst of the pandemic – but the backdrop has taken a sudden turn.

The pandemic-driven supply chain backups are continuing, inflation is at a

40-year high and proving to be a more than short-term phenomenon, and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is upending the world order that’s held since the Berlin Wall fell.

All of that and more has filtered into retail stocks.

Wells Fargo said the companies they cover in the space are down 25 percent so far this year compared with a 5 percent drop for the S&P 500.

“On valuation, the majority of our coverage is now trading at recessionary levels – a 14-year low in price-to-earnings multiples – in advance of what we believe will be negative revisions in the next six to nine months,” Wells Fargo said.

The market is changing fast, but fashion has largely been holding fast to bullish outlooks that flow out of a year that enjoyed better prices and more full-price sell-throughs for many brands, tighter assortments and more expense discipline.

But consumers’ unusual buying patterns that materialized during the pandemic might not be sustainable.

The analysts broke down spending by category from 2014 through 2019 and then from 2019 and 2021, showing a rapid expansion in compound annual growth rates.

Jewelry, for instance, was growing at a 1 percent clip in the five years before the pandemic and accelerated dramatically to 22 percent growth over the past three years, the study found. Apparel and footwear was growing at a 2 percent rate before COVID-19 and then at 8 percent since the pandemic began.

Customers, in short, “overshot” their established spending in the categories.

Just how sticky those spending trends are could be fashion’s million – or billion – dollar question, and a key sticking point for retail outlooks.

Wells Fargo analysts warned that the consumer rush in fashion could taper off.



“Despite the strong consumer backdrop, we’d characterize 2022 guidance as increasingly unrealistic,” Wells Fargo said. “Especially considering that the market expects that our discretionary categories appear to have ‘overshot’ on consumer spending by 10 percent to 20 percent in 2021 compared to pre-COVID[-19] run rates and normalized wallet share, the setup for our group from here appears very challenged in the near term.”

Taken altogether, it’s another warning flare for the industry that held up amazingly well last year, but might well face some trouble ahead.

“Inflation remains elevated – including commodity prices, which are eating into discretionary spending,” the analysts said, noting U.S. gasoline prices have risen about 45 percent over the past year. “Geopolitical tensions, most notably

the war and Ukraine, are also a risk, particularly for many of our global names with large exposure to Europe. While many companies have noted continued strength in Europe, we believe there is potential for a slowdown if the situation in Ukraine worsens and spills further into the region.”

That could also pressure retailers’ newfound resolve to push full-price sales and not turn to price promotions to move goods.

“The biggest risk if consumers pull back on spending is top-line guidance misses, which is problematic in and of itself, but also likely will lead to higher markdowns and gross pressure,” Wells Fargo said. “Many continue to push the narrative that companies have ‘overearned’ during the last 12 to 18 months, and record-high gross margins are not sustainable.”

## BUSINESS

## Lululemon Announces New Senior VP Hires

- Simon Atkins has become SVP, footwear, and Phil Dickinson will be SVP, global creative director.

BY LISA LOCKWOOD

Lululemon has tapped two executives to bolster its product team: Simon Atkins has joined as senior vice president, footwear, and Phil Dickinson will become senior vice president, global creative director.

Both executives, who are assuming new positions, report to Sun Choe, chief product officer.

Atkins, who began Monday, will lead the development and execution of the brand’s new global footwear strategy and business, overseeing the category’s innovation, development and merchandising teams, and partnering with design, supply chain and brand.

Atkins has spent more than 25 years in various senior level brand, marketing, communications and general management roles at Adidas. His most recent role was senior vice president and general manager



Simon Atkins

of Adidas’ Global Basketball and U.S. Sports business, where he was charged with the global businesses of basketball, American football, baseball and hockey. Under his leadership, the global category became the fastest-growing performance category for the brand.

“Lululemon’s brand strength is unparalleled and it’s an incredible time to join its best-in-class product team,” said Atkins. “I’m excited to be part of Lululemon’s continued growth story, and build on the positive response the brand has already received in launching its footwear offering.”

Lululemon said last month it was introducing four new athletic shoes, designed specifically for women. Blissfeel, the brand’s running shoe at \$148, was



Phil Dickinson

launched online and in select stores across North America, Mainland China this month and in the United Kingdom Tuesday. Three additional styles will be released in the coming months: the Chargefeel cross-training shoe, Strongfeel training sneaker and Restfeel post-workout slide. A separate footwear line for men will be introduced next year.

Dickinson, who starts July 18, will be instrumental in shaping the brand’s global creative strategy and roadmap for product design. He is expected to build upon the work of Lululemon’s design team.

Dickinson worked for Nike for 15 years, leading its growth in football and the wider sportswear categories, and established Some Ideas, a creative agency in London. Most recently, he was global creative

director for SuperDry, a U.K.-based apparel company where he had oversight of product design and driving the creative direction of the brand.

“I couldn’t be more thrilled to join Lululemon and its team of creatives, who every day continue to redefine the product experience for its guests across apparel, accessories and footwear,” said Dickinson. “With the growing significance of versatility in product, Lululemon holds an extraordinary position in the market, and I look forward to continuing to build upon that strength.”

According to Choe, “As we continue to build upon our strength in bringing product innovation and technical credibility to our guests in head-to-toe solutions, we’re excited to bolster our product leadership team with the appointments of Simon Atkins and Phil Dickinson. Both leaders bring a deep understanding of guest needs and a global mind-set that will enable the brand to accelerate and scale our growth around the world.”

On its most recent earnings call last week, chief executive officer Calvin McDonald said the company has plenty of momentum and opportunities still in its core business, as well as new stores on tap, and new categories such as footwear rolling out. There’s also room to expand internationally. The brand was one of the few to post solid gains through the pandemic and continues to do so.

For the three months ended Jan. 30, net income increased 31.7 percent to \$434.5 million from \$329.8 million a year earlier. Revenues for the three months rose 23.1 percent to \$2.1 billion from \$1.7 billion a year earlier, as reported.

## BUSINESS

# Gucci Names President of Greater China Fashion Business

- Laurent Cathala joins Gucci from Tiffany & Co. in a new role for the company.

BY LUISA ZARGANI

**Gucci said** Tuesday it has appointed Laurent Cathala president of Greater China fashion business, a new position that will further contribute to the company's increased focus on the fashion segment.

He is expected to be in place by the end of June, based in Shanghai and reporting directly to Marco Bizzarri, Gucci's president and chief executive officer. All the Greater China leadership team will report to Cathala.

Cathala joins Gucci from Tiffany & Co, where he started as vice president emerging markets in Dubai. He subsequently was promoted to president Greater China and president of the North Asia Region, positions he has held for the past seven years.

Cathala started his career in the Moulinex Group and then moved to LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, where he held various roles including Europe export director and brand general manager parfums Givenchy

Russia, general manager LVMH Ukraine and CIS and general manager Guerlain Middle East.

Following these experiences, Cathala served as brand general manager at MAC Cosmetics in the Middle East and India.

In order to ensure consistency in the repositioning of the category, the watches and jewelry business will be managed globally from Gucci's Milan corporate headquarter. Lilian Chen, managing director, watches and jewelry Greater China, will therefore report directly to Maurizio Pisanu, global managing director watches and jewelry and global director, high end, lifestyle and decor.

The C-suite changes signal an ongoing brisk activity at Gucci in terms of human resources.

As reported, according to market sources Maria Cristina Lomanto is to join Gucci as executive vice president, brand general manager – also a new role for the Italian luxury company.

Lomanto is brand manager at Roger Vivier and is expected to join Gucci on May 16, the date of the brand's upcoming men's and women's show.

Lomanto will be focused on coordinating collection and retail merchandising, visual merchandising, beauty and eyewear licensing and retail training and report to Bizzarri.

In addition, Lomanto will be supported by Phillip Prado, currently senior vice president, merchandising and inventory planning Americas, who has been promoted to the role of global chief merchandising officer accessories. Davide Tosi was appointed global chief merchandising officer ready-to-wear, also reporting to Lomanto.



Gucci, fall 2022

## BUSINESS

# Valentino Names Janice Lam CEO Greater China

- A former Prada and Dunhill executive, Lam succeeds Mitchell Bacha.

BY LUISA ZARGANI

**Valentino** has named Janice Lam as chief executive officer Greater China reporting ad interim to the company's CEO Jacopo Venturini.

She succeeds Mitchell Bacha, who was appointed to the role in April last year. Previously, Oliver Yang held the role of CEO Asia Pacific from 2008 to 2021.

Lam previously covered the role of managing director China for Alfred Dunhill and in Prada she was general manager for China.

She is tasked with driving Valentino's expansion in Greater China providing strategic direction and focusing on retail with the main goal to reinforce brand awareness and cement Valentino's presence in the region.

Valentino has 28 stores in the region, ranging from Beijing and Shanghai to Hong Kong and Macau as well as Chengdu and Xi'an among some.

In 2022, the company plans to open four additional stores in Chengdu SKP and at Shenzhen Bay MIXC.

Valentino has been reorganizing its executive structure. As reported, Laurent Bergamo, who was appointed Valentino's CEO of Americas in September 2020, will be promoted to chief commercial officer Americas, Brazil, Europe and Middle East, effective May 1.

Venturini will oversee the CEOs of Greater China, Japan, South Korea and South East Asia. Last year, Valentino tapped former Zegna, L'Oréal and Berluti executive Masumi Shinohara as CEO Japan and South Korea.

The year 2021 was key for Valentino, as Venturini carried out a repositioning of the brand, further elevating its couture status and returning the company to the black and to 2019 sales levels.

Despite the impact of the pandemic, in the 12 months ended Dec. 31 revenues rose 39.6 percent to 1.23 billion euros, compared with 882 million euros in 2020. In the fourth quarter of last year, retail sales climbed 29 percent, driven by full-price sales, balancing the contraction of markdowns.

In 2021, retail sales were up two percentage points to represent 57 percent of total revenues compared with the previous year and Venturini is aiming for this channel to account for 70 percent of sales by 2024 or 2025.

## FASHION

# Amber Valletta Creates Eco-Friendly Clothes for Karl Lagerfeld Collaboration

- Cactus leather, organic cotton and recycled linen went into the range for spring 2022.

BY MILES SOCHA

**While cactus leather**, organic cotton and recycled linen are all part of Amber Valletta's new eco-friendly fashion collection for Karl Lagerfeld, what's equally important are the simple, classic styles she insisted on: tank tops and tank dresses, white shirts, mannish tailoring – and a perfect Perfecto.

"It was important that the collection be designed with timelessness in mind since this idea is closely tied with sustainability and extending the life of

our clothes," she explained.

The concise Karl Lagerfeld x Amber Valletta collection is dropping Wednesday on karl.com, Farfetch and Zalando – in line with the brand's digital-first orientation – and from Thursday at Karl Lagerfeld stores and select wholesale accounts.

The brand's sustainability ambassador since last October, Valletta first teamed up with Karl Lagerfeld for a range of spring 2021 accessories made of cactus leather and organic cotton.

Those pillow-like K/Kushion bags in vegan cactus leather are reprised for the spring 2022 range, including two smaller shapes. Ready-to-wear retails from 89 euros to 545 euros and includes a jumpsuit,

pinstriped trousers and a pencil skirt.

Key fabrics include the upcycled and fully circular material Tencel x Refibra by Lenzing, and cactus leather by Mexican firm Desserto, while colors are kept neutral.

According to the Karl Lagerfeld company, production houses were selected where possible to be close to the fabric supplier in order to minimize the environmental impact.

"Working with Amber has pushed us to think outside of the box even more when it comes to innovation and design," said Pier Paolo Righi, chief executive officer of Karl Lagerfeld, which is aiming to "continuously improve how we move through the world with sustainability at the forefront of our values."

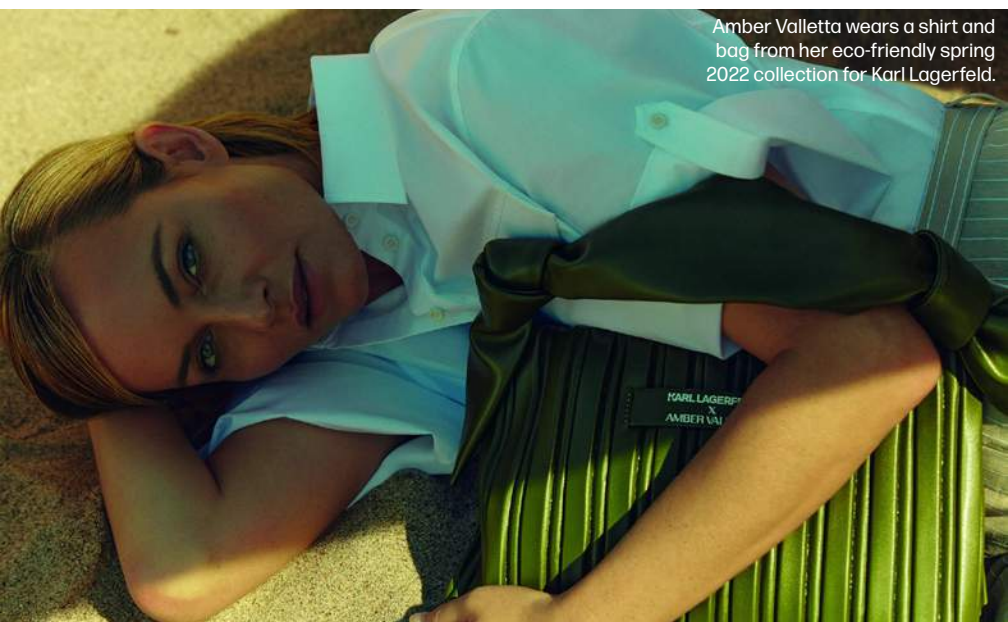
An original '90s supermodel who appeared recently on the fall 2022 runways of Prada, Chloé and Off-White, Valletta is also a film and TV actress and a prominent sustainability campaigner.

"This capsule collection truly reflects my style – timeless, sustainable and relaxed," Valletta told WWD. "Karl's iconic influence is at the core of this collection. We designed it to be effortlessly chic where the pieces could be interchangeable with multiple looks."

She cited a wish to incorporate "non-seasonal items, but with an edge," like the biker jacket that she rocked during Paris Fashion Week at a dinner Karl Lagerfeld hosted in her honor.

"I think that each piece is desirable," she added. "The whole collection was mindfully designed and produced while selecting fabrics that used natural fibers with third-party certifications."

Amber Valletta wears a shirt and bag from her eco-friendly spring 2022 collection for Karl Lagerfeld.



## FASHION

# Lafayette 148 Launches Made in Italy Outerwear Capsule

● The outerwear retails between \$2,298 and \$3,298.

BY LISA LOCKWOOD

**Lafayette 148** has introduced L148 Outdoor, a capsule collection of Made in Italy waterproof outerwear for spring selling.

The collection of versatile classics features a trench, an elongated anorak and a car coat. Each unlined piece has thermo-sealed taped seams providing water resistance.

“Outerwear is part of the brand DNA. The company has a history of designing beautiful, versatile outerwear well before my time here, a category the customer has come to rely on Lafayette 148,” said Emily Smith, creative director. “But that doesn’t mean we get comfortable in our best practices. My approach to design is 360. We look to the past for inspiration and knowledge, to the present for the immediate needs of our customer and to the future for ingenuity and progress.”

She said the way they decided which three pieces to focus on was based on the customer’s needs. “The customer is evolving and growing as we continue to push on design and innovation. This doesn’t mean that what we’re providing her with, what we’re offering, shouldn’t be focused and be an essential to her wardrobe. We developed the first key three styles for launch, giving extreme attention to a level of enhanced execution. Confident we, with great credit to the artisans in Italy, achieved what we set out to do: timeless design and masterful construction.”

The outerwear retails between \$2,298 and \$3,298. The garments carry the Lafayette 148 New York label, and are being carried at Lafayette 148’s freestanding stores and e-commerce, along with Neiman Marcus, Saks Fifth Avenue and Nordstrom. The outerwear is manufactured in Tuscany, where their partners’ multigenerational expertise

and commitment to sustainable practice helped craft each piece.

Lafayette 148 is using Italian structured cotton that has a flourine-free water-repellent finish. The super-light double-face fabric is created through bonding two layers of compact cotton, creating a natural barrier against the elements. It also uses Italian tech cotton with is 64 percent cotton and 36 percent Polyamide flourine-free water-repellent finish. This fabric features a technical weave construction that combines high-density cotton warp yarns and Nylon super-matte weft yarns.

Thermo sealing and thermo welding techniques are also used in several outerwear pieces. In thermo sealed, for example, the tape is applied along the seam by a combination of pressure and heat, creating a water-proof seal to prevent rain from entering the holes left by the traditional stitching. For thermo welded, traditional stitching is replaced entirely and the edges of fabric are welded together by precise heat and pressure applied to the tape along the seams. This allows the garment to be manufactured with the minimum thickness. The garments are left unlined to expose the craftsmanship of the contrast tape.

Proportions feature Italian bridle and Nappa trims, along with soft ruching on the sleeves and the signature Lafayette 148 copper cuoio tone.

Smith explained that the Lafayette 148 woman relies on them for strong outerwear, particularly in the fall and especially in the Northern market. They are opening a store in Toronto this year and anticipate “entering the market strong.”

For fall, Smith said they will be adding new styles to the L148 Outdoor capsule, as well as developing heirloom outerwear pieces. “Outerwear has to be both designed for aesthetic and functionality,” she said. “We’ve already taking wait list requests for a long hair Italian shearing. In true Lafayette 148 style, the coat is reversible.”



A look from the L148 Outdoor collection.

## FASHION

# Stella McCartney Delves Into Disney’s ‘Fantasia’

● A capsule collection, with its psychedelic colors and prints, is an extension of the spring 2022 mushroom-inspired collection.

BY SAMANTHA CONTI

**LONDON** – Stella McCartney is adding some magic to her mushroom-themed spring collection with a capsule of psychedelic clothing based on Walt Disney’s 1940 musical film “Fantasia.”

The unisex collection was inspired by McCartney’s love for the film, which was radical for its time, mixing experimental visual effects with classical music by composers including Bach, Beethoven and Tchaikovsky.

The clothing, accessories and kidswear reference the film’s colors, characters and, of course, Mickey Mouse, who appears in many guises. Scenes drawn from the film include “Rite of Spring” and “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice.”

McCartney told WWD that her mother, Linda, “was a huge fan of Disney, so I grew up watching ‘Fantasia.’ I loved escaping



A look from Stella McCartney’s new Disney Fantasia capsule collection.

reality into this colorful and psychedelic world of magic, animals and powerful symphony music. It was ahead of the time then, and is more relevant than ever now. It felt natural to trip into ‘Stella McCartney

Presents Disney Fantasia’ from our love affair with the magic of mushrooms.”

She said the capsule taps into the brand’s “ageless and youthfulness – and I’m so excited to introduce one of Disney’s most beautiful animations to a new generation through fashion.”

This is McCartney’s second collaboration with Disney following the International Women’s Day and Disneyland Paris project that saw her design a trouser suit for Minnie Mouse. It is also an extension of her spring 2022 campaign “Mushrooms Are the Future.”

For her spring 2022 collection, McCartney drew inspiration from the 2019 Netflix documentary “Fantastic Fungi,” staging her show at Espace Niemeyer in Paris, in a room that resembled the frilly underside of a champignon. The show featured synthesized music created from the sound of mushrooms living and growing.

During that show, McCartney debuted a bag made with mycelium leather courtesy of Bolt Threads, the California-based company with which she’s been working, and showed off vegan, recycled and regenerated cashmere, nylon and animal-free leather.

In the capsule, Mickey Mouse hand motifs and art from rare, 1940s posters appear across limited-edition, repurposed silks from the LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton Nona Source, a start-up that emerged from the group’s incubator program that makes unused luxury fabrics

available to the group’s brands. Knitwear sparkles with PVC-free sequins.

The sustainable Loop sneaker showcases rainbow Mickey Mouse graphics, while the brand’s signature Elyse platforms feature Fantasia prints.

Accessories include the Falabella bag covered with rainbows and dotted with crystals, and black recycled backpacks and camera bags with contrasting white Mickey Mouse motifs.

The capsule will be released on April 6 on the brand’s site, with prices ranging from 50 pounds to 2,500 pounds.

Fantasia is the latest in a long line of McCartney capsule collections that riff on cultural moments from the designer’s past, and music made by her father Paul McCartney and The Beatles.

Her women’s pre-fall and men’s fall 2019 collections were inspired by the 4K-digitized, re-released version of “Yellow Submarine.” She worked illustrations from that film into an embroidered jacket and whipped Pop Art portraits into intarsias on regenerated cashmere knits.

Last November, she released a “Get Back” unisex collection inspired by the Disney+ documentary directed by Peter Jackson.

That collection featured graphics and typography inspired by the band’s album covers, and psychedelic prints done by their longtime collaborators, The Fool collective, whose artwork McCartney discovered hanging on a wall at her father’s house.



Ralph Lauren Polo Earth.

## BEAUTY

## Ralph Lauren Focuses on Sustainability With Polo Earth

- Ralph Lauren's new fragrance represents a "new way of working," said Alex Choueiri, global brand president of Ralph Lauren Fragrance.

BY JAMES MANSO

**Ralph Lauren Fragrance** is bringing a sustainable focus to its newest launch.

The brand is setting sights on sustainability with Polo Earth, a genderless product that is launching this month at select retailers. The scent ranges in price from \$28 for 10 ml. to \$148 for 200 ml.

For L'Oréal, which holds the fragrance license for Ralph Lauren, the launch represents a "new way of working," according to Alex Choueiri, global brand president of Ralph Lauren Fragrances.

"It's the first product where we pushed sustainability, and as much as we could, we focused on every element of the mix to make it as sustainable as possible," he said.

Polo Earth is 97 percent natural origin ingredients, including plant-based alcohol. It is also vegan, and the carton, label and wooden cap are all FSC-certified.

The refillable bottle is 30 percent lighter than Ralph Lauren Fragrance's traditional bottles, and is made with 20 percent post-consumer recycled glass.

"The fragrance industry has this habit of putting a lot of glass to make a product look luxurious and beautiful, but if we're really serious about wanting to minimize the environmental impact, it should be as light as possible without breaking. The heat to create a bottle has a carbon footprint, and you want to minimize that," Choueiri said.

The company is also not using cellophane, which is made of plastic, when shipping the product, and the nonprofit Arbor Day Foundation will plant a tree for every unit of the 100 ml. and 200 ml. refills purchased in the U.S.

"There's really a number of things that we managed to do, and a number of things we'd still like to do," Choueiri said.

The fragrance's notes feature bergamot heart, green mandarin and diva lavender; mid notes of rose and sage heart, and base notes of vetiver and bourbon geranium. The alcohol used in the fragrance is naturally derived.

According to a statement, it is in line

with Ralph Lauren's commitment to create 100 percent recyclable, reusable or sustainably sourced packaging by 2025.

"We've done a lot of initiatives, and almost every one of our projects for the last year has had something to do with sustainability. We launched the Earth Polo years ago, which kicked off an entire program and division inside of our company dedicated to sustainability," said David Lauren, chief branding and innovation officer at Ralph Lauren.

"This fragrance has started long before the momentum of those programs, and now I'm happy it's happening now because it's hitting home our commitment," he continued.

Ralph Lauren Fragrances isn't afraid to activate digitally. Last year's launch of Ralph's Club included a virtual clubhouse; Polo Earth will include an augmented reality experience.

"The product will have a QR code, and then it's going to lead to an experience that shows you the bottle and why it's sustainable," Choueiri said. "Then it shows you the seven sustainably sourced ingredients, and because of our partnership with Arbor Day Foundation, you can plant virtual trees in the spaces around you."

Neither Choueiri nor Lauren commented on sales, although industry sources estimate Polo Earth to reach between \$50 million and \$60 million at retail in its first year.

## FASHION

## Fiorucci Returns to L.A. With Retail Pop-up at Fred Segal

- The label debuted its spring collection at Fred Segal, and is dressing influencers for Coachella.

BY BOOTH MOORE

"It's so nice to bring the angels back to the City of Angels," said Fiorucci designer Daniel Fletcher, reflecting on what it means to have the brand back in L.A., with a pop-up shop at Fred Segal through the end of April debuting the new "Desert Oasis" spring collection.

The installation is timed to the Coachella Valley Music & Festival, which runs the weekends of April 8 to 10 and 15 to 17 in Indio, Calif. Fletcher shot the spring look book in Joshua Tree, and the brand will be dressing some of the festival attendees.

Fletcher joined the storied Fiorucci brand in December 2019, shortly after competing on the Netflix fashion competition show "Next in Fashion."

He spent the pandemic months focusing on jersey-driven T-shirts and sweats with the signature cherub motif "because that's what everyone was buying at the time," said the designer, who studied at Central Saint Martins in London. "It feels like now we've finally been able to expand the collection — there's dresses and shirts and loads of party things because Fiorucci is a party brand."

Fletcher's first experience with the popular '80s label was seeing Fiorucci artwork in his fashion school library. "It was always on my mood boards, and when they brought it back in 2017, I was really excited to see what they were going to do....They did a really good job bringing back the sweats and Ts, and then they brought me in to inject that fashion element back into it.

"People love it because of the history but we want to plan for the future, too," he said describing the rich Fiorucci archives, which include

everything from matchbooks from the L.A. store, to jeans that Keith Haring painted. "It's incredible...but I want in another 50 years' time for people to say, 'look what they did in 2022.' This collection has a lot of those '70s pieces and anything-goes, going-out attitude, but also a love of the earth, which was very important to Elio."

Fletcher said he was inspired for spring by a hand-painted sign from the archives that reads "Love Earth & Nature." "The archive is full of artwork dedicated to the planet and Elio's passion for protecting it," he said.

The "Desert Oasis" collection, \$75 to \$395, offers core embroidered denim and seasonal jersey styles (including a T-shirt exclusive to the store), alongside silk shirts in playful palm prints. Sunbeams stretch across crochet knits, and rising desert heat patterns across mini slipdresses. Cycling shorts, bucket hats and crossbody canvas bags add to the genderless festival wardrobe feel.

The Fiorucci brand was founded by Elio Fiorucci in Milan in 1967 with an emphasis on curve-hugging, Lycra stretch denim (some call Fiorucci the inventor of skinny jeans) and T-shirts with whimsical graphics. His empire quickly went global, when Fiorucci stores — some of the original lifestyle emporiums — opened in New York, London and L.A..

The New York boutique, which opened in 1976, was not only a store but a hangout and pop-culture crossroads, where Andy Warhol stopped in daily for an espresso because he thought the coffee bar was the best in town, said Fletcher.

In the early 1980s, Fiorucci's art director was Maripol, the architect of Madonna's image in the "Like A Virgin" days. Oliviero Toscani, who shot many of the era's groundbreaking Benetton ads, also shot for Fiorucci.

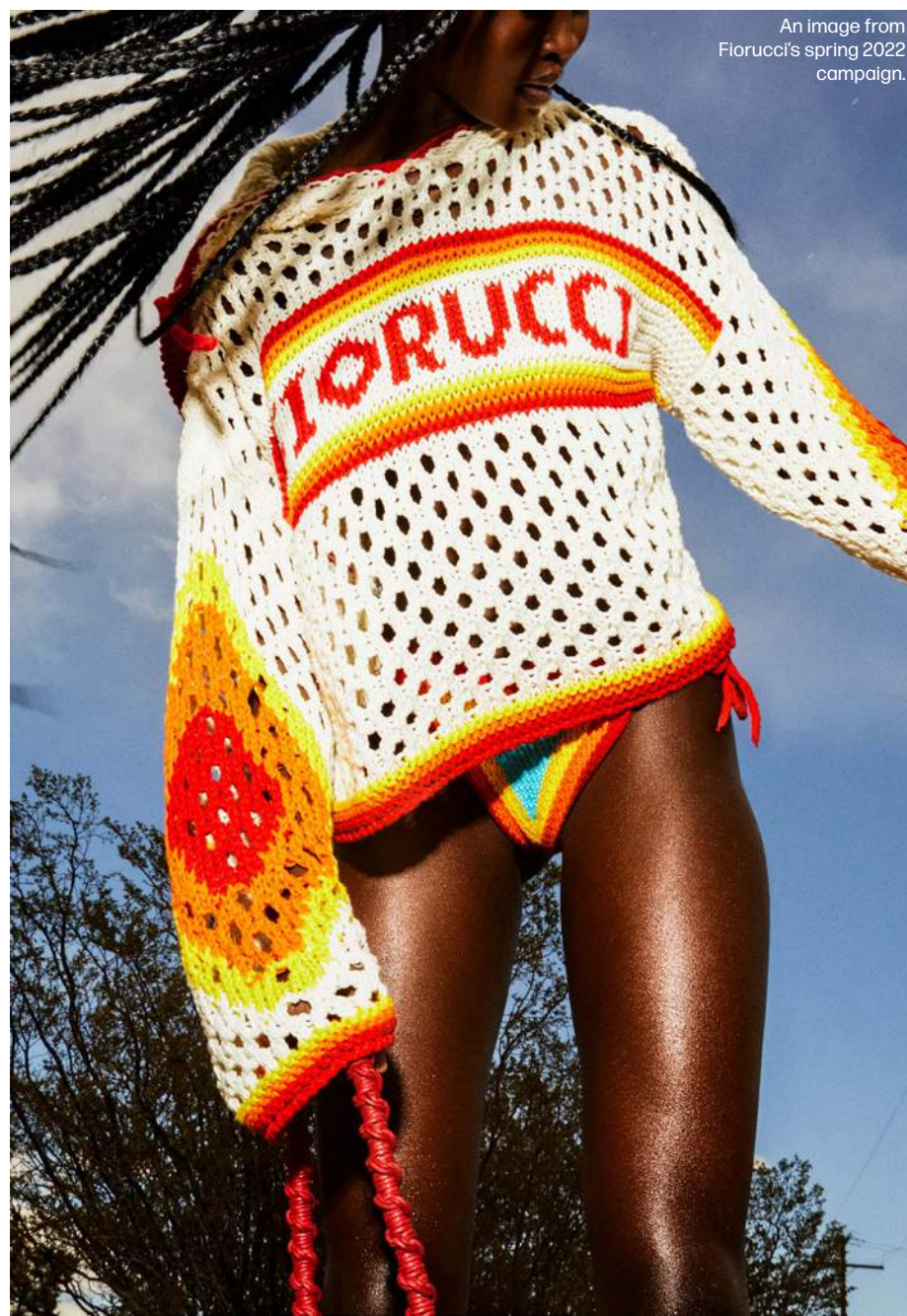
Veteran British clothing retailers Stephen and Janie Schaffer acquired Fiorucci from Edwin Jeans in 2015. Edwin, a division of Itochu, had owned the Italian brand since 1990. New investors have come on board

recently from Naga Brands Group.

Fiorucci has been wholesaling to Revolve, Kith and others in the U.S., but the Fred Segal pop-up is the first direct concession it has had. The brand opened a London flagship on Brewer Street in 2017,

offering customization services, vintage wares and more.

Fiorucci has big plans for 2023, including a collaboration with White Mountaineering and a return to Milan with a new retail store.



An image from Fiorucci's spring 2022 campaign.

## The Sustainability Scene



# Ambitious Green VC Firm Counts Leonardo DiCaprio In Its Wing

To keep its early-stage portfolio moving forward on the path of change, Regeneration.VC uses a gauge to measure regenerative impact. BY KALEY ROSHITSH

**Seemingly overnight**, Pangaia's Earth-centered mission swept into mainstream consciousness.

Wheat pastings popped up in New York's East Village and talent was culled from the Global Fashion Agenda, and most recently Ssense. A pop-up with Nordstrom was followed by the launch of Pangaia Superfoods, which sealed the material innovator's seemingly ubiquitous presence.

The early-stage, private company leans into its capital infusions from VC firms like Beverly Hills-based Regeneration.VC and Squared Circles (cofounded by British businessman Alexander Gilkes).

Just last week, Regeneration.VC launched a \$45 million inaugural fund devoted to supercharging consumer-powered climate innovation, with Leonardo DiCaprio, a strategic adviser, and William McDonough, circular advocate and "Cradle to Cradle" coauthor, in its wing.

WWD spoke with general partners Dan Fishman and Michael Smith on the firm's aims.

Fishman is a longtime brand builder (including House of Harlow with Nicole Richie, L'Agence, and Coolhaus) turned investor. Smith – a former DJ – founded and operated media and real estate ventures before establishing Ponvalley, a climate-focused family office.

Regeneration.VC invests across apparel, food and CPG with three core themes being design (packaging and materials), use (products and brands), and reuse (reverse logistics and marketplaces).

"When we invest in companies, we obviously look at the economic opportunity in the market and the environmental [impact]," said Smith, in

reference to the \$4.5 trillion opportunity in climate-related solutions. Although long-term goals stretch out to 2025, 2030, 2050 and the like, in the case of the United Nations or other global blueprints, the firm is focused on the early stage and getting companies to scale.

"It's far easier to measure early-stage companies. All of that focus and interest helps drive innovation with the next-generation. With early-stage companies, you can look to address and solve a variety of pain points....Consumers have more power than they realize here. Their purchasing decisions vastly improve the planet [and] supercharge the evolution of this and move the consumer to consumer and regenerative models."

Along with Pangaia, there's VitroLabs, which leverages cell culture technology to design animal husbandry out of leather supply chains; Cruz Foam, which transforms aquaculture processing waste streams into a certified compostable polystyrene alternative, and Arrive, a resale and rental solution provider to names like Dick's Sporting Goods and Eddie Bauer.

"A lot of the backend IP that they are incubating – the seaweed fibers, the carbon capture glasses, the next iterations of leather...Where we fit in, we can look at these businesses as a business point of view. Apparel and food are two areas that I live in and love," added Fishman. "Within apparel, fibers are just at the beginning of a revolution."

Although the firm is centered around a shared mission to "reverse" the climate emergency, the partners agreed the state of the climate crisis may mean adaptation and mitigation are the only means.

To keep their early-stage portfolio

Leonardo DiCaprio is a strategic adviser and limited partner to Regeneration.VC.



General partners Michael Smith and Dan Fishman of Regeneration.VC, the investment firm behind Pangaia, VitroLabs and Arrive.



rooted on the path of change, Fishman mentioned Regeneration.VC's Regenerative Environmental Gauge, which was codeveloped with partner Katie Hoffman, who cofounded the University of California Berkeley's divestment campaign.

The REG is lining up the firm's quarterly reporting on a go-forward basis, which will cover efforts in overall resource footprint, greenhouse gas emissions, material use and waste, toxicity and human-related impacts.

Joann is getting into the fabric reuse game.



## A Solution for Last Season's Fabrics, Earth Month Events Sweep

With Earth Month in full swing, events spanning academia, industry, media and actions are swift to tackle fashion's waste. BY KALEY ROSHITSH

### AN UPCYCLE PLAY

Recent brand efforts are spanning everything from new B Corp props to sustainability impact labels (in the case of underwear brand Parade), as well as new avenues for last season's fabrics.

Last season's fabrics – from designer namesakes spanning bridal and ready-to-wear, such as Jason Wu, Reem Acra, Rachel Comey and Loeffler Randall – are finding new life at Joann Fabrics.

Aptly named the "Last Call Designer Fabrics" collection – the online-only offering consists of nearly 100 low-volume fabric runs available exclusively to Joann, a national fabric and craft retail chain. Fabrics range from \$19.99 to \$109.99 per yard. More drops are planned throughout the year

as a solution for not only small-scale designers but regional crafters keen on upcycling.

### EARTH MONTH EVENTS

April is already seeing a slew of sustainability and climate change-related events, product launches and campaigns.

For academia, this includes the Fashion Institute of Technology, hosting its 16th annual virtual business and design conference April 5 and 6, addressing topics like social justice, materials, waste and more.

Marist College will display a fashion exhibit "Ethereal" featuring the works of Stella McCartney, Gabriela Hearst and Mara Hoffman, among others.

The show opens on April 21 at Marist's Steel Plant Gallery with a student-run conference the following day.

Meanwhile, DonateNYC and the Sanitation Foundation return with the fourth run of ReFashion Week, April 2 to 8, highlighting the need for reduced textile waste.

Harlem's Fashion Row is putting on its inaugural sustainability event April 21. The hybrid event features both in-person (held at Pier 57 at Hudson River Park) and virtual access.

The Sustainable Fashion Forum returns with its virtual and IRL programming April 22 to 23 geared to both a consumer and industry set.

Earthday.org presents Earth Day, on April 22, and is putting

an increased spotlight on sustainable fashion. Themed "Invest in Our Planet," the event hopes to catalyze investment in solutions for the climate crisis, to which a recent U.N. climate report only accentuated.

Capping out the month, on April 28, Fairchild Media Group (including WWD, Footwear News and Beauty Inc) convenes its virtual sustainability forum, "Scaling Solutions: The Innovator's Agenda."

Conversations span regulation, zero-waste design, next-gen materials and more on the pathway to scale, with speakers like Rachel Zoe, Nicholas Kirkwood and Just Capital's chief strategy officer, Alison Omens.

# *Dream Wedding*

New York Luxury Bridal Fashion Week is back and the styles for the 2023 season have a moody, ethereal and, of course, utterly romantic sensibility. Here, an exclusive preview.

Photographed by **Kevin Sinclair**  
Styled by **Alex Badia**







# INES DI SANTO

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AMSALE



# WWD NEW YORK LUXURY BRIDAL PREVIEW

A look from Ines Di Santo  
bridal fall 2022.



## Bridal Fashion Week Returns to New York

New York Luxury Bridal Fashion Week is returning from April 6 to 8 with a hybrid schedule of in-person and virtual 2023 collection debuts.

BY EMILY MERCER

**New York Luxury Bridal Fashion Week** is running from Wednesday to Friday with a hybrid schedule of in-person shows, presentations and market appointments, as well as virtual collection debuts, for the 2023 season.

“Each designer will decide and communicate what their specific plans will be,” The Bridal Council said of the April market, which is shaping up to be a robust calendar to match the uptick of weddings coming out of the pandemic. “The demand is there from the brides. This year is set to be the biggest number of weddings

since 1984,” Michelle Iacovelli, executive director of the council, further explained.

For the fourth season, The Bridal Council is continuing its partnership with Pullquest to feature the 2023 collections on The Bridal Council x Pullquest’s digital showroom platform. The site will display the online presentation schedule and continue to act as a digital marketing tool and sales platform with collection imagery and videos, downloadable press kits and more for six months following Luxury Bridal Fashion Week.

“The wonderful thing is over 13

countries will be represented by designers traveling to New York City, the capital of bridal,” Iacovelli told WWD. “What’s interesting is that even though collections will be presented digitally, the brands will still be in New York doing market appointments, it’s a real hybrid.”

Global designers to be featured on The Bridal Council x Pullquest’s platform include Amsale, Anne Barge, Dana Harel, Ines Di Santo, Jesus Peiro, Kaviar Gauche, Lea-Ann Belter, Madeline Gardner, Maria Elena Headpieces, Mira Zwillinger, Naeem Khan, Neta Dover, Peter Langner, Romona Keveza, Sachin and Babi and Sareh Nouri.

In addition to those featured on Pullquest, the CFDA’s New York Luxury Bridal Fashion Week calendar, created in collaboration with The Bridal Council, is full of in-person and digital bridal events from Wednesday to Friday. For instance, Sachin & Babi and Naeem Khan are scheduled to debut runway shows of their new collections, while Ines di Santo will be hosting in-person appointments.

From emerging to established,



A preview of The Bridal Council x Pullquest homepage.

additional bridal brands featured on the calendar include Elie Saab, Theia, Monique Lhuillier, Enaura, Francesca Miranda, Rami Ali Ali, Rosie Assoulin Bridal, Eve of Milady, Pia Gladys Perey, Berta, Sophie et Voila, Honor, LoveShackFancy, Jenny Yoo, Halfpenny London, Verdin, Anne Barge, Vera Wang, Rebecca Schoneveld, Nadia Manjarrez Studio, Odylyne the Ceremony, Julie Vino, Morilee by Madeline Gardner, Galia Lahav, Houghton, Lihi Hod, Lela Rose, Inbar Freiman, Rita Vinieris, Sheila Frank, Besa, Justin Alexander Signature, Savannah Miller, Scorsesa and Kelly Faetanini.

## Sachin & Babi Returns to Bridal With RTC Collection

Sachin and Babi Ahluwalia are marking their return to bridal this season with the launch of their “RTC,” or “Ready-to-Celebrate,” collection. BY EMILY MERCER

**New York-based designers** Sachin and Babi Ahluwalia are marking their return to bridal this season with the launch of their “RTC,” or “Ready-to-Celebrate,” collection.

The 2023 collection, which includes bridal gowns, a selection of “Little White” fashions and bridesmaid offerings across approximately 20 styles, is set to hit the New York Bridal Fashion Week runway on April 7 with Ken Downing as master of ceremonies.

“We are bringing our [ready-to-wear] experience and sensibility to bridal. We are consciously creating looks for every outing, event and destination for the bride,

with price points that are more palatable to the sophisticated shopper. We created this new concept for today’s modern bride with their own demand and streaming lifestyles, eliminating the long lead times of receiving a dress and being more size-inclusive,” Sachin Ahluwalia told WWD. “We call it the ‘RTC’ concept, which is ‘ready to celebrate.’”

“It’s pretty much turn-key, what we show is what we stock. We take a lot of the fuss away,” Babi Ahluwalia further explained, adding that looks from the collection will be available to purchase through their e-commerce.

Like the duo’s rtw collections, RTC boasts a modern, sophisticated elan with designs crafted in luxe materials, offering a variety of styles for today’s bride, as well as a selection of fashions for the bridal party and mother of the bride.

For instance, a sleek column gown, “uber fashionable, easy sexy pieces,” within Little White, or various separates, like a crop top with embroidered crepe flowers over lace with wide-leg pants – versatility beyond the aisle was noted of importance for the collection.

Accessible pricing, too, is a key element for RTC – within the collection, which goes up to size 14 in select styles, gowns range from \$950 to \$1,500, “Little White” is priced from \$395 to \$500, and bridesmaids’ offerings start at \$285.

“We recognize that priorities have shifted after the pandemic – today’s bride is much more individual as a result of exposure to fashion and lifestyle in different ways, including social media,” Ahluwalia said of their new approach. “The whole idea of traditional weddings – that bride will always have a place to find her gowns, but I think there’s so many in between. I think young women today are looking for something



A gown from Sachin & Babi RTC.

more experiential than anything else. To satisfy those experiences, you need a wardrobe and clothes that somehow meet that, whether she’s going to Tulum for a wedding or a small garden in New York City.”

# Market Moments

A snapshot of the industry's latest launches, collaborations and up-and-coming designers.



HERE AND BELOW:  
Footwear styles from  
Piferi's bridal capsule.

## Piferi to Debut Bridal Capsule

● **Luxury**, vegan footwear label Piferi is expanding into the bridal market, with founder and creative director Alfredo Piferi's first bridal capsule set to debut during New York Bridal Fashion Week.

"If there is very little for vegan luxury shoes for bridal, there are no competitors," Piferi told WWD of the bridal capsule's inception point, adding, "I wanted to create a wedding capsule that looked sharp and was not only designed as a romantic exercise.... When somebody says 'I do' in your shoes, you become their brand for life," the designer said. "To dress a bride on her wedding day is something that honors me."

The debut bridal capsule includes 10 styles priced \$650 to \$1,200 in styles ranging from sleek pearl- and crystal-adorned pumps and strappy sandals to comfortable flats and platforms. The brand also noted being open to collaborating with customers on custom styles.

"We are executing lots of custom-made bridal requests, and it is something I adore. Inviting the client to the studio, listening to their dreams and designing something, especially for them, is a moment I cherish." The bridal capsule will be available alongside the brand's main collections through the brand's e-commerce, as well as through retailers like Bergdorf Goodman, Neiman Marcus, Harvey Nichols, Level Shoes, Brown's, Lane Crawford, Bloomingdale's, On Pedder and more. — Emily Mercer



## Bespoke Joseph Abboud Sets Sights on Grooms

● **When it comes to** weddings and special occasions, it's often the bride that gets all the attention. The Joseph Abboud brand is out to change that.

At the end of 2020, Joseph Abboud, which is owned by the brand marketing firm WHP Global, launched a new made-to-measure suit offering called Bespoke Joseph Abboud that is manufactured at its factory in New Bedford, Mass. The brand is working feverishly to fill the demand for formalwear left by the events rescheduled due to the pandemic.

"It's no secret that the special occasion/wedding/tailored clothing business is back in full force," said Jeff Jones, vice president of merchandising for WHP, who oversees the Abboud brand.

WHP bought the Abboud brand from Tailored Brands, in 2020 for \$115 million

and as part of the deal, entered into a licensing deal with the retailer for the exclusive right to sell and rent the brand's apparel in the U.S. and Canada.

Jones said the Massachusetts factory can produce up to 400 suits a day and is running at full capacity.

The Bespoke Joseph Abboud collection is sold directly to consumers through the brand's website where guys can book an appointment to have a stylist come to their home or office and help them create their own look. In addition, they can also visit one of the Men's Warehouse stores scattered throughout the country and work with the staff there to build a Joseph Abboud Custom suit.

Prices at Men's Warehouse start at \$799, Jones said, and at \$950 for Bespoke Joseph Abboud. — E.M.



Bespoke Joseph Abboud

## Marla Aaron Celebrates 10 Years



Marla Aaron's  
engraved DiMe Ring.

● **This year marks the** 10-year anniversary for New York-based fine jewelry designer Marla Aaron.

Over the last decade, the designer has become known for her innovative fine jewelry creations, including fine jewelry hardware locks, necklace chains and charms, as well as Trundle, DiMe, Inlay rings and more.

Last year, the designer was encouraged by DeBeers to create versions of her technically and functionally rooted signature ring designs with center stones.

"In terms of bridal, we started with a lock and now we have thousands of iterations," Aaron said over Zoom of her decision to, "throw her hat in the ring," and create styles designed as alternative bridal options, as well as for daily life.

The latest collection, titled "DiMe Siempre," includes intriguing, alternative bridal takes on her signature designs boasting unique center stones with intricate clasps inspired by jeweled evening bag closures, with the ability to



Marla Aaron's  
engraved DiMe  
Siempre Ring.



Marla Aaron's  
engraved  
Trundle  
Lock Ring.

engrave personal messages between the metal bands.

"We are in a very emotional business, the jewelry business. I have seen an uptick in the emotional aspect of our jewelry.... People are wanting connections and to be together, I'm seeing that on many levels. Jewelry is a very emotional purchase — be it a classic engagement ring, or anything," Aaron said of her business, adding that she will also be launching a collection of trundle lock rings with baguettes, which can be worn as locks on necklaces, or as stand-alone engagement rings.

Marla Aaron's engraved Trundle Lock Ring.

In addition to new designs and business growth, over the pandemic, the designer raised \$80,000 to benefit New York restaurant workers through the sale of miniature sterling silver chairs (modeled after those common in restaurants) in her luxe vending machines.

Last month, the designer brought back the activation and donated 100 percent of the chairs' proceeds (a total of \$42,000 as of mid-March) to World Central Kitchen, which provides fresh meals to Ukrainian families. — E.M.



Looks from Lounge by Ines Di Santo.

## Ines Di Santo Launches Loungewear Collection

● **Avant-garde bridal** designer Ines Di Santo has launched a new category of loungewear essentials called Lounge by Ines Di Santo.

"I think what defines Ines as a designer and makes her who she is, is the fact that she, herself — when in lounge mode, she always has something fabulous on.

We spend a lot of time in hotels together and she always has the best robes, camisoles and minidresses. Anything she has would have the most beautiful lace trim and is so luxurious," Veronica Di Santo, daughter of Ines Di Santo and the brand's managing partner, told WWD.

"I asked her why she always wears this and she replied, 'I am not only preoccupied with fashion, but I want to look and feel a certain way, even when I'm sleeping.'"

Lounge by Ines Di Santo's first collection, "Seven Sensual," boasts seven key styles in stretch satin: the Tulip Cami, Signature Cami, Tulip Short, Signature Short, Signature Mid-Length Robe, Tulip Robe and Signature pant. Each style is offered in brushstroke floral prints and solid hues with mix-and-match appeal. The line, retailing from \$110 to \$298, is available through the brand's e-commerce, as well as at its global boutiques. While the category is independent of the Ines Di Santo bridal line, it serves as a complement to the business. — E.M.

# WWD NEW YORK LUXURY BRIDAL PREVIEW



Cristine Sun wearing a bespoke wedding gown by Yueqi Qi.



FIL, a retailer in Fuzhou, China, ordered Susan Fang's designs as wedding dresses.



A look from Huishan Zhang's bridal collection.



## China's Younger Generation Seek Cool Wedding Alternatives

While their demand only represents a tiny portion of China's 1.7 trillion renminbi wedding industry, many of them are influential tastemakers.

BY TIANWEI ZHANG

**China's affluent,** young and fashion-savvy brides-to-be in big cities like Beijing and Shanghai are writing their own rules when it comes to finding the one dress for the most important day in their life.

While their demand only represents a tiny portion of China's 1.7 trillion renminbi wedding industry (as of 2021, according to Statista), many of these people are tastemakers who can easily influence the rest of the market with their active presence on social media platforms like Xiaohongshu, Douyin and Weibo.

For them, the big number doesn't have to be white, but it should be the envy of all their invitees. For that, some tap into the traditional culture revival trend, choosing traditional wedding outfits gilded with golden dragon and phoenix embroideries, while some commission well-known fashion designers to adapt runway reactions for the occasion, or simply ask for bespoke service to create the dream dress.

Eveningwear specialist Huishan Zhang, whose private clients range from China's elusive red princesses in Beijing to business

empire heiresses in Shanghai, Hong Kong and Singapore, told WWD that he has been getting a considerable amount of bridal requests as many of his loyal customers are planning to throw lavish weddings as the COVID-19 pandemic is coming to an end.

"Most of our bridal clients have been our existing clients, but as we have done more weddings we have been introduced to new clients through the bridal side of the business, which is great. The demand was there, so we decided to design a stand-alone bridal collection. Seeing pictures of women wearing sequins and feathers for their wedding day is just so fun," he said.

"We have also had a growing bespoke business for weddings that give brides the opportunity to have something totally unique. I love seeing how originality has become so important to brides. Across ready-to-wear, bridal and bespoke we are able to cater to so many different types of brides from simple and chic to the most experiential," he added.

Zhang observed that affluent brides in China nowadays have less desire to be

that makes the dress look like floating watercolor paintings – as the most popular wedding option.

"We found out they were used for weddings as people started asking if they can be customized. People also order our bubble crystal glass headpieces as bridal veils," she said, adding that FIL, a retailer in Fuzhou, China, simply markets her designs as wedding dresses in store.

Samuel Gui Yang, Shushu/Tong and Caroline Hu are also noticing this shift, but on different levels.

Yang said even though he thinks his brand is still a long way from having a proper bridal business, the use of red in his Chinese culture-influenced designs has made him an attractive option for some.

"Currently we have a commission project for a couple who is going to have their wedding celebration in Italy this upcoming summer, due to the Chinese heritage reason that they see from some of our pieces," he said.

Another reason he sees the younger generation is moving away from traditional western styles is the lack of originality and creativity in the local bridal dress business. He thinks whomever manages to combine the traditional elements with modernity as many emerging Chinese talents have done in the space of designer fashion in recent years can build a huge business around that.

Liushu Lei, cofounder of Shushu/Tong said he sees that the style of wedding dresses that his friends in the creative industry go after has changed dramatically in recent years. He enjoys designing wedding dresses for his close friends as it gives him unlimited creative freedom.

Hu, who creates fairy-like dresses with her unique smocking technique to recreate and experiment with watercolor effects, said half of her private orders are for weddings. Most of the clients want a white dress made in her style, and some of them are also asking for pieces in more experimental colors.

Yueqi Qi, one of the 19 semifinalists for this year's LVMH Prize for Young Designers, is also discovering that there is this lucrative opportunity in the market after Cristine Sun, an influencer friend of hers with millions of online followers, wore a dramatic bespoke black gown with embroideries of white phoenixes and red ribbons at her lavish wedding last November.

"She wanted something dark, with Chinese elements and their names on the wedding dress. She told me that she tried those bridal brands, such as Vera Wang. The wedding dresses that they have are mostly traditional western style in white. She wants something more special," she said.

Since then, she has been getting a lot more enquiries and has designed another wedding gown for a private client.


traditional on their wedding day.

"They like to go to rtw brands for their wedding dress rather than traditional bridal brands as there is an opportunity to be more unique and also more in keeping with their personal style. Also as Chinese brides tend to have a lot of outfit changes throughout the course of the wedding, it allows them to be more experimental with both style and color across all the different occasions," he said.

Susan Fang, whose airy sheer dresses and beaded accessories have earned her more than a dozen of international stockists, including Selfridges, Dover Street Market and Browns, has been seeing a growing number of customers tagging her on Instagram in wedding photos.

"People now know what they want and like instead of just following the main trend, they want something unique and made with love. Our pieces are always inspired by nature and made in a very surreal way. Always very joyful and feel a bit ethereal. So mood-wise it fits weddings and special occasions well," Fang said.

She counts her signature air-embroidery pieces – layered white organza dresses with colored feathers within the organza

A woman with long, wavy brown hair and blue eyes is the central figure. She is wearing a white, sheer, one-shoulder dress with a delicate floral pattern of white fabric flowers. The dress has a thin white belt at the waist and a full, flowing skirt. She is standing on a sandy beach with the ocean in the background. Her hands are on her hips, and she is looking slightly upwards and to the left. The lighting is soft and natural, suggesting a bright, sunny day.

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WONDERS

MIRA ZWILLINGER

# WWD NEW YORK LUXURY BRIDAL PREVIEW

Chinese actor Chen Xiao and actress Michelle Chen getting married in reimagined Chinese traditional bridal ensembles by Guo Pei.



## Guo Pei on Redefining China's Own Bridalwear

The Chinese couturier has built a sizable bridal empire in China using techniques old and new to create magnificent wedding ensembles. BY TIANWEI ZHANG

**SINCE RIHANNA** wore that “pancake dress” at the 2015 Met Gala, Guo Pei has become synonymous with Chinese fashion to many in the West.

But very few know that besides her haute couture collections shown in Paris since 2016, she has built a sizable bridal empire in China, dressing some of the biggest celebrity couples, the wealthiest families and, more importantly, everyday people who simply want to look their best during the most important occasion in their life.

She makes garments with techniques old and new from around the world and is pushing for a shift in Chinese society from wearing Western styles to reimagined Chinese traditional ensembles for the main ceremony.

In an interview with WWD, Guo revealed that the change was decades in the making.

“Now an increasing number of younger Chinese people are choosing to be wedded in Chinese bridal outfits if you have to choose one. They will rent a Western-style gown for the wedding and pay for a bespoke Chinese-style one. Before that, Western-style was more popular and the Chinese outfit was mostly seen at the post-ceremony dinner party,” she observed.

“I have been designing for four decades. I know too well how China has changed. When China reopened to the world in the ‘80s, we believed everything from the West is better because we had nothing. It wasn’t until the 21st century that we began to have a sense of self-awareness, and it took another decade before we began to have a clear understanding of our own identity.

“Many of the big celebrities are wearing my designs for their weddings because they think it better represents their image and demonstrates a sense of responsibility of being a role model in Chinese society. But before 2010, that wasn’t the case at all,” she added.

Since founding her bespoke business Rose Studio in 1997, Guo has designed

many wedding gowns for her clients. The brand takes around 1,000 bespoke orders annually, and a fifth of them are bridal.

“Wedding is arguably the most important moment in many people’s life. That’s why they want to wear something special for the occasion. At the time, the majority of them wanted Western styles, and maybe a few of them would ask for some Qipao for a second or third outfit during the ceremony,” she said.

After making many countless wedding dresses, it struck her one day in 2009 that there really wasn’t a universal standard on what is considered a Chinese wedding outfit.

“In Western fashion, you have bridal styles like Victorian or fishtail. At the time, Qipao was the only style that people associate with Chinese weddings. But I don’t think Qipao is grand enough for weddings. So I began to have this idea that I should create modern China’s own wedding outfit,” she added.

The same year, Guo had the opportunity to design the wedding outfits for a client who was born in Shanghai, raised in Beijing, and to be wed in Hong Kong. She was the only daughter, and the groom was the eldest son. So the wedding was a top priority for both sides of the family, and they planned to host three wedding ceremonies in the three cities.

“I spent over a year working on outfits for her and her entire family, including a Western-style wedding gown and a Qipao. One day, her grandmother-in-law from Hong Kong came to me. She brought me the very wedding outfit she wore when she got married five decades ago, folded in a small metal box.

“I was really amazed by how a set of silver embroidered outfits in Cha Zhou style can fit into such a box the same size as a biscuit tin. I was really touched at the moment. I would like to think that I had made a career for myself back then in China, but it was the first time for me to see something so beautiful so closely.

“She wanted me to alter the piece for my client so that the bride-to-be can wear it at the ceremony in Hong Kong. She has asked all the tailors in town for that, but no one dared to touch it as it was too precious. I was excited about the challenge. I kept the piece for four months to study the embroidery technique, and spent a few more months to complete the alteration,” Guo recalled.

The moment when she returned the garment to the family, a voice from the bottom of her heart was telling Guo that “this is what bridalwear in modern China should look like,” even though nobody supported her at the time. Not even her husband.

“China was still a place where many believed that everything from the West is superior, and the idea of wearing traditional outfits for weddings is dated. People loved brands like Vera Wang. I was way ahead of the time,” she said.

“But I was determined. I spent three years making 30 pieces of wedding gowns to showcase what I think Chinese brides should wear. I wasn’t bound by rules. I used all the best techniques the world has to offer to make these dresses. Then I hosted an exhibition in 2012 to present them. Each garment was surrounded by flowers,” she added.

Shortly after, Guo got her first order, a set of reimagined Chinese wedding outfits embroidered with ultra-fine gold thread, for 2 million renminbi, or \$314,300 at current exchange.

She justified the price point, saying the goal was to find materials that would result in the most beautiful dress for the client. Also, Guo sees the wedding outfit as much more than a product that she is selling.

“When I am presenting the garment to my clients, what I am imagining is what it will look like three generations from now. A woman watching his grandchild wearing the very dress she got married in walking down the aisle is what I call a fulfilling life. It was at that moment that the garment



HERE AND ABOVE: Reimagined Chinese traditional bridal ensembles by Guo Pei.

I designed showcased its biggest value,” Guo explained.

The pursuit of timeless beauty also applies to her work beyond bridalwear, and she reaffirmed her stance in welcoming all sorts of aesthetics and techniques in fashion design.

“If you study traditional Chinese embroidery, you probably won’t see any traits of them in my work. For a nation with so much history like China, inheriting what’s before us is just the first step. What’s more important is how you take it from there. In the beginning, I followed the rules. But decades later, I am free from them,” said Guo.

“I have long forgotten the boundary between what’s ours and what’s theirs. I don’t care what are the main styles of Chinese embroidery. I use whatever can help me reach my goal. Maybe 50 years from now, people will call it the Guo Pei style of embroidery,” she added.



A woman with curly hair and a pearl headband stands in a garden, wearing a white lace dress with long, flowing sleeves. The background is a lush green garden with trees and flowers.

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# WWD NEW YORK LUXURY BRIDAL PREVIEW

## Chantal Khoueiry on Bridal Power Dressing

The founder and CEO of Brides Do Good is helping turn the bridal dress business into a circular economy, and using proceeds from sales to educate young women, and end child marriage. BY SAMANTHA CONTI



Chantal Khoueiry, the founder and CEO of Brides Do Good.

**LONDON** — Since 2016, Chantal Khoueiry has been at the forefront of the circular fashion economy with Brides Do Good, the e-commerce platform that gives brands and brides the chance to donate pre-loved wedding dresses, or out-of-season stock, for resale.

Brides Do Good isn't just any secondhand clothing platform. It is a social impact enterprise, too, with a third of sales going to charities that work to end child marriage and empower young women through education.

The business has evolved swiftly since its founding. At the start, it was Khoueiry, founder and chief executive officer of Brides Do Good, who was asking for dress donations; raising funds for charity, and trying to change the long-held mindset that wedding gowns could only be worn once.

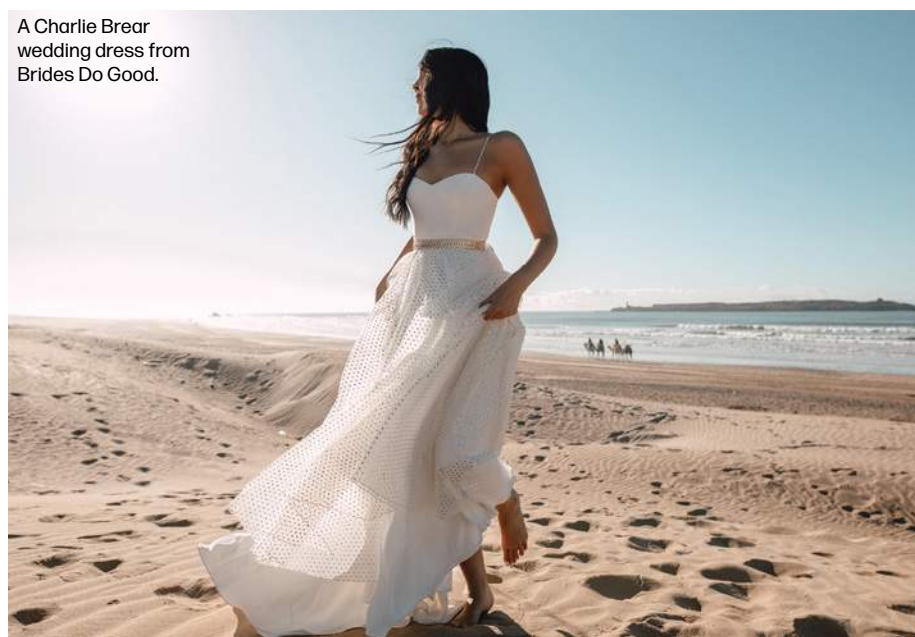
Now, Khoueiry said the company is buzzing with appointments from future brides buying online from the brand's website, or booking appointments for sales and fittings at the company's shop in South Kensington.

Some 80 percent of current stock is from brands including Pronovias, Sassi Holford, Temperley London, Suzanne Neville and Savannah Miller, which donate prototypes, samples, and pieces from old collections. The remaining 20 percent of stock comes from brides' own donations.

Sizes range from U.K. six to 22, and prices fall between 600 pounds and 4,000 pounds. A circular economy has emerged, with some customers choosing to hand back their dresses after the big event. Khoueiry said one of the dresses has been down the aisle on three separate occasions.

"We encourage brides who are returning dresses to leave a love note for the next

A Charlie Brear wedding dress from Brides Do Good.



one who wears the dress," she said, adding that the whole process is meant to be a feel-good experience.

Customers can book an appointment, and either buy online or visit the South Kensington shop, where they will be offered Champagne as they browse the collection. The bride usually has two to three fittings (and pays for alterations) while a seamstress is on call to make adjustments up until the wedding day.

Over the years, and especially during the pandemic, Khoueiry said, "there's been a shift in the mind-set" of brides and brands alike. People are increasingly aware of the impact that recycled wedding dresses have on the planet, and are keen to help the charities.

Last year, Britain's First Lady Carrie

Johnson made headlines in the U.K. after choosing to rent her dress when she married Prime Minister Boris Johnson at Westminster Cathedral in London.

The flowing white dress with bell sleeves had been rented from the fashion platform MyWardrobe HQ. At the time, the tulle and silk dress by Greek designer Christos Costarellos cost 2,870 pounds to buy and 45 pounds a day to rent. A few weeks later Johnson would generate news once again, renting her wardrobe for the G7 Summit in Cornwall.

"Pre-loved is way more accepted now, as people are more conscious about price and the impact on the environment. They also want to do good and raise money for the 12 million girls under the age of 18 who are forced into arranged marriages

each year," said Khoueiry, adding that proceeds from sales go to charities that focus on education and other efforts to ensure that girls can attend school on a regular basis.

She said that, so far, Brides Do Good has funded more than 2 million days of education for young women, who might otherwise not be able to attend due to poverty or health-related issues.

The pandemic, she added, has only made life worse and "is forecast to set the progress of women and children back more than two decades. Unless we take action now, 110 million girls will lose their future and become child brides by 2030," she said. Poverty often forces parents to sell daughters into marriage so they can feed the rest of the family.

Since it was founded, Brides Do Good has partnered with Plan International U.K., most recently helping to fund its Safe Schools for Refugees Program in Ethiopia. It has also worked with Huru International, which provides menstrual pads and health education to girls who are forced to miss school due to their periods.

In the U.K., it launched the #OnlyAGirl campaign to raise awareness about the dangers of child marriage in England and Wales.

With help from other advocacy groups, Brides Do Good has helped to overturn the longstanding law allowing girls as young as 16 to marry with parental consent, an exception that left children vulnerable to familial coercion to enter into a marriage against their will. The Minimum Age Bill, which raises the legal age of marriage in England and Wales to 18, and criminalizes any marriage under that age, will soon become law.

Khoueiry, whose main job is chief culture officer at Bicester Village Shopping Collection, grew up in Kuwait with an Italian Ethiopian mother and a Lebanese father. She founded Brides Do Good because she wanted to undertake a project with a strong humanitarian angle. The early part of her career was spent as a project leader at UNESCO, supporting various humanitarian global initiatives.

The idea for the platform dawned on her after she heard a married friend admit that she could not "emotionally let go" of her wedding dress. "How many women feel the same way?" Khoueiry asked. "We're giving them permission to let go of the dress."

So far, the platform has been privately funded by Khoueiry, who said she plans to take on investors in a bid to accelerate growth.

She said her bosses at the Bicester Village Shopping Collection have always been supportive, "encouraging entrepreneurship, and businesses that can have an impact."

To wit: Bicester Village in Oxfordshire, England is running a monthlong "Do Good" pop-up boutique until April 21, as part of its "Unlock Her Future" campaign. The village is working with charity partners in aid of women and children worldwide, and will donate a portion of proceeds to Brides Do Good.

The pop-up boutique stocks new and pre-loved pieces from brands including Victoria Beckham, Mother of Pearl, Molly Goddard and Cefinn, and from celebrities and stylists including Isabel Spearman, Katherine Ormerod, Michelle Dockery and Pippa Vosper. Funds raised from the pop-up will go directly to Brides Do Good, Into University, Smart Works and World Connect.

Although she has a permanent store in London, Khoueiry said she will continue to do pop-ups for Brides Do Good, with the next one set to open soon at Kildare Village in Ireland (part of the Bicester Village Shopping Collection). Another European pop-up in the pipeline for October.

A woman with blonde hair pulled back, wearing a white lace wedding dress with long sleeves and a high neckline. She is holding a large bouquet of pink roses. The background consists of horizontal wooden slats.

SAREH NOURI  
NEW YORK

**WWD** NEW YORK LUXURY BRIDAL PREVIEW

Mira Zwillinger Studio's  
tulle gown with dandelion-inspired  
embroideries and 3D appliques.  
Jennifer Behr headpiece;  
Jared tennis bracelets; Zaxie ring.

# *Dream Wedding*

New York Luxury Bridal Fashion Week is back and the styles for the 2023 season have a moody, ethereal and, of course, utterly romantic sensibility. Here, an exclusive preview.

Photographed by **Kevin Sinclair**  
Styled by **Alex Badia**



NEW YORK LUXURY BRIDAL PREVIEW **WWD**

Besa's Italian crepe with silk grosgrain ribbon dress. Wing & Weft lace gloves; Jimmy Choo pumps; Alexis Bittar earrings (worn throughout); Roxanne Assoulin necklaces; Jared tennis bracelets; Zaxie ring.

**WWD** NEW YORK LUXURY BRIDAL PREVIEW

Amsale's floral jacquard gown with detachable cape and sleeves. Twigs & Honey veil; Zaxie rings; Swarovski rings.





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**WWD** NEW YORK LUXURY BRIDAL PREVIEW

Anne Barge's mikado scuba gown and detachable train. Jennifer Behr tiara; Wing & Weft gloves; Alexis Bittar earrings.







MORILEE  
MADELINE GARDNER

[www.morilee.com](http://www.morilee.com)

**WWD** NEW YORK LUXURY BRIDAL PREVIEW

Rita Vinieris' embroidered lace jumpsuit with hand appliqués 3D flowers and sequined lace cape with hand-appliquéd 3D floral lace detail and pearl button.  
Jimmy Choo pumps; Twigs & Honey veil; Jared tennis bracelets; Zaxie rings (worn throughout); Swarovski rings (worn throughout).





b e s a

**WWD** NEW YORK LUXURY BRIDAL PREVIEW

Morilee by Madeline Gardner  
Signature Collection tulle gown  
with floral lace appliques, wide  
horsehair edged hemline and train.  
Sareh Nouri veil; Jennifer Behr  
crown; Wing & Weft gloves.

**JUSTIN ALEXANDER  
SIGNATURE**



**WWD** NEW YORK LUXURY BRIDAL PREVIEW

Ines Di Santo's brocade gown.  
Jennifer Behr headpiece; Alexis  
Bittar earrings; Zaxie rings;  
Swarovski rings.



# NEW YORK LUXURY BRIDAL PREVIEW **WWD**

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# WWD NEW YORK LUXURY BRIDAL PREVIEW



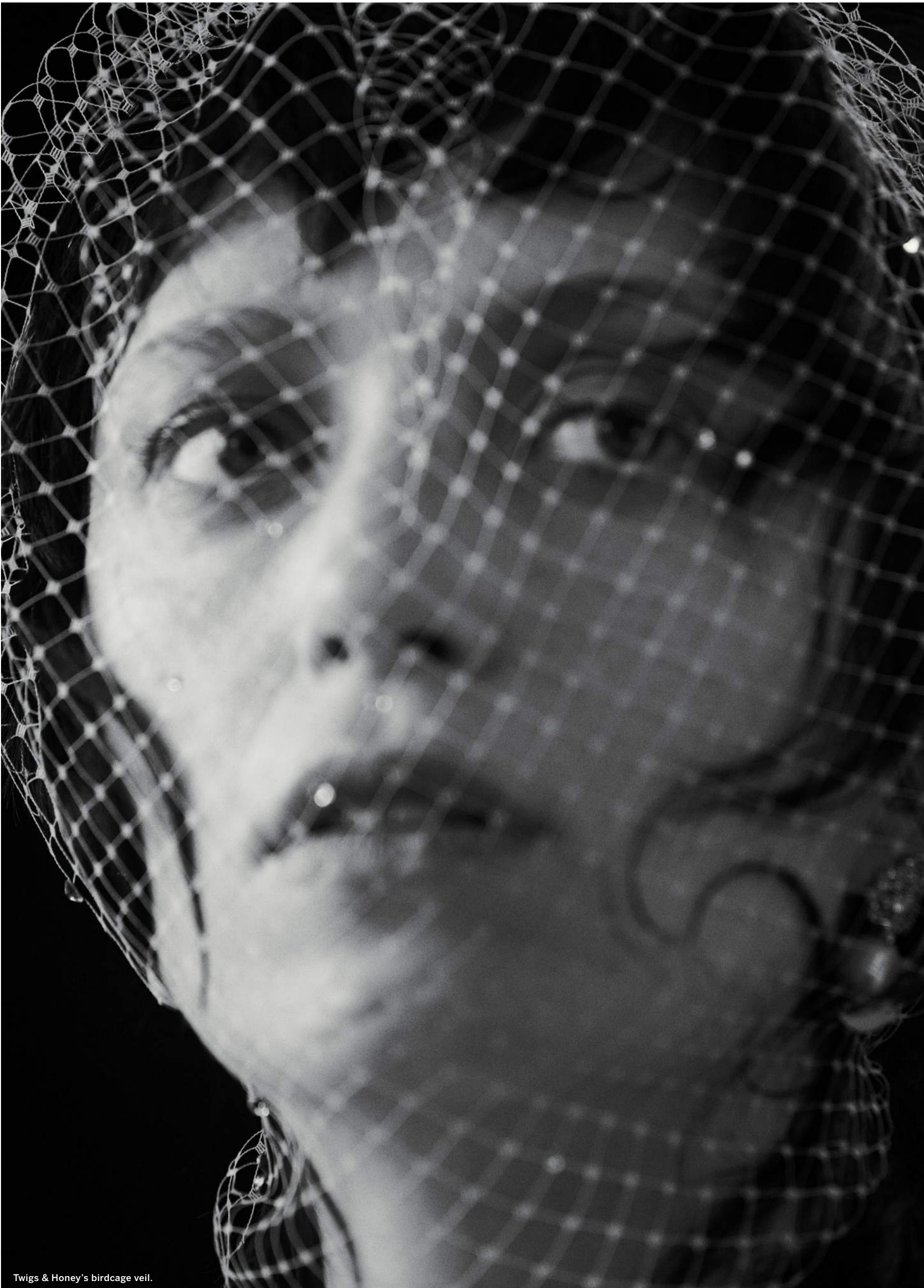
Justin Alexander Signature's jersey, crepe and tulle gown. Wing & Weft gloves; Zaxie ring.



NEW YORK LUXURY BRIDAL PREVIEW **WWD**

Sareh Nouri's faille gown and  
Francesca Miranda's 4-ply  
silk crepe cape. Jennifer Behr  
headband; Wing & Weft gloves;  
Alexis Bittar earrings.

# WWD NEW YORK LUXURY BRIDAL PREVIEW



Twigs & Honey's birdcage veil.

NEW YORK LUXURY BRIDAL PREVIEW **WWD**

Rami Ali Ali's hand-beaded tulle gown with silver glass seed beads and silk slip. Jimmy Choo pumps; tulle veil; Odylyne the Ceremony lace veil; Zaxie rings (worn throughout); Swarovski rings (worn throughout).

MODEL: SARAH MCCALL AT STATE MANAGEMENT  
HAIR BY TAICHI SAITO  
MAKEUP BY CAITLIN WOOTERS  
CASTING BY LUIS CAMPUZANO  
MARKET EDITOR: EMILY MERCER  
FASHION ASSISTANTS: ARI STARK AND KIMBERLY INFANTE

# WWD NEW YORK LUXURY BRIDAL PREVIEW

## Jane Atelier Launches Capsule Collection

The collection will include simple, clean shapes for the minimalist bride. BY SAMANTHA CONTI

A look from the new Jane Atelier bridal capsule collection.



**JANE LEWIS** has whipped her streamlined '60s aesthetic into a debut collection for brides who want to keep things smart, simple and affordable.

Jane Atelier's debut capsule consists of five styles in white and cream that range in price from 460 pounds to 690 pounds. In an interview Lewis, the brand's founder and creative director, said she plans to expand the collection to include a variety of wedding looks for bridesmaids, the wider wedding party and guests, too.

"It's not structured, or corseted – there are no floor-length ballgowns here. This is not about excess," Lewis said in an interview.

"These styles are meant to resonate with the customer who likes our handwriting. We want to be ticking that box for her," said Lewis, who built her ready-to-wear brand on chic, streamlined pieces for day and evening. She's selling Jane Atelier via the brand's own e-commerce site, and with retailers including Farfetch.

She decided to launch bridal due partly to the pent-up demand in the market in the wake of the pandemic.

Lewis, who was already doing looks for weddings and special occasions, said she wants to cater to "brides-in-waiting" (people who had to postpone their weddings due to COVID-19) and for couples playing catch-up now that there are no longer restrictions on public gatherings or indoor events in the U.K. and other places.

Lewis, founder and creative director of the label, also wanted to dress people for new wedding formats such as civil partnerships, informal settings, lunches, drinks and other celebrations.

Bridal looks include a jumpsuit; a tailored two-piece skirt suit with a boxy jacket à la Jacqueline Kennedy in her White House years, and a simple '60s shift dress, shapes that were all drawn from Jane Atelier's 20-year archive.

Lewis said she wants to offer her customer a timeless look so that when she casts an eye over her wedding photos decades from now "she'll know that she just looked exquisite, thoughtful and considered on the day – not trapped in a time warp."

**"IT'S NOT STRUCTURED, OR CORSETED – THERE ARE NO FLOOR-LENGTH BALLGOWNS HERE. THIS IS NOT ABOUT EXCESS."**

**JANE LEWIS, JANE ATELIER**

The spirit of the capsule comes from Lewis' own wedding gown, which was couture Anouska Hempel. She described it as "very, very, very streamlined, A-line and strapless."

Going forward, Lewis will begin introducing sugar pinks and pale pastels to the collection, as well as seasonal colors.

The move into bridal comes in the wake

of changes at the brand.

Formerly known as Goat, the brand changed its name to Jane Atelier last year after selling the original global trademark to 1661/Goat Group for an undisclosed sum, and after more than a year of legal wrangling.

The label's '60s-style, Space Age font, which Lewis had trademarked when she set up Goat in 2001, still belongs to her, and now it spells "Jane." The first collection under the new name launched for fall 2021.

There are other changes afoot: Lewis has shut Jane Atelier's London Conduit Street shop, and plans to replace it with a concept store in London, but she didn't give any details.

She had opened Conduit Street in 2014 as part of The Crown Estate's 1 billion pounds real estate regeneration project. It spanned 660 square feet, with timber parquet floors and white walls, minimal lighting and vintage furniture handpicked by Lewis.

She said the decision to shut zConduit was her own, and said the brand will always rely on e-commerce as well as physical retail.

"We'll 100 percent have a bricks-and-mortar presence. I'm still taking stock and want to do something that is relevant to the consumer today. I'm taking my time, and want to devote my full attention to the project," she said.

In the meantime, she said she's enjoying the flexibility of being online-only. She said it allows the company to be agile and flexible. "We can do whatever we like," she said.

## Galia Lahav Unveils First New York Flagship

The Israeli brand will own the entire bridal experience, taking inspiration from the multifunctional couture houses in Paris. BY ARI STARK

**THE BUSINESS OF** bridal is as competitive as any Olympic sport. Israeli brand Galia Lahav is going for gold as a slew of professional athletes were recently swept up in its glittering universe.

In January, tennis pro Sloane Stephens walked down the aisle at the St. Regis in Bal Harbour wearing a plunging lace ballgown courtesy of the brand's head designer, Sharon Sever. In March, gymnast Simone Biles and track and field star Tara Davis revealed they, too, will wed in custom Lahav creations. Both athletes made the announcement via Instagram, posing with a sign inside the brand's Los Angeles atelier that reads: "I said yes to the dress at Galia Lahav."

Now, Northeastern brides-to-be will be able to recreate the same photo-op at Galia Lahav's first stand-alone New York flagship. Open to the public on April 9, it will serve as the venue for Sever's spring 2023 bridal presentation two days prior.

"Our Manhattan location is more than a store. It is a fashion house and it is a direct channel to our atelier, to Tel Aviv," said the designer, whose vision for an Israeli couture house was modeled after those in Paris, having apprenticed there for the likes of Pierre Balmain, Carven and Christian Lacroix.

With 8,000 square feet of planned retail, office and event space spread across two stories, materializing maison Galia Lahav

was no small feat. To do so, the brand entrusted Saar Zafrir of the Amsterdam-based design firm whose past projects include Brussels' Le Conteur restaurant and the Provocateur Hotel in Berlin.

"We really wanted to create a boutique-like customer experience that made all our brides-to-be feel the most relaxed and comfortable while choosing 'the one,'" Sever said.

Zafrir's team worked in a serene palette of blush and ivory, bringing in warmth with brass accents. Curvaceous lines evocative of the female form ebb and flow throughout, while textural components – from velvet drapes to natural hardwood floors and travertine inlays – match decadence with comfort.

Save for midcentury inspired seating and a smattering of pampas grass, the interior leans minimal, allowing the dresses – and the clients who will flock to SoHo to try them on – to shine.

Once inside, a bride can take her appointment in one of the store's private suites – a full-service bar will be at the ready should she need a cocktail to ease any pre-wedding jitters. Meanwhile, the on-site atelier enclosed behind glass will allow her to watch as her fantasy gown is cut, stitched and beaded into reality.

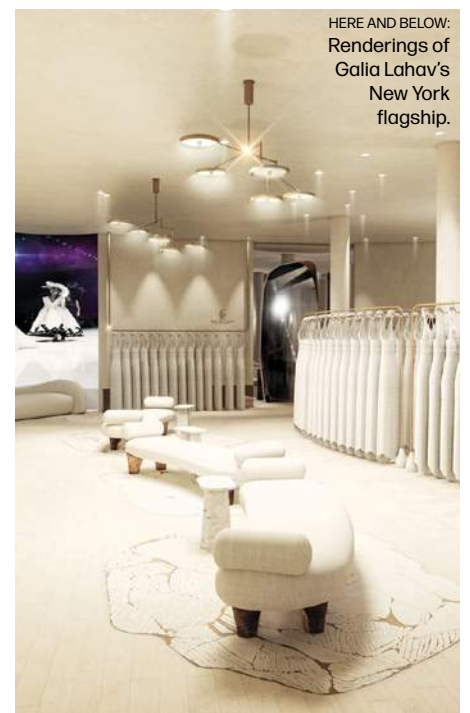
Galia Lahav SoHo will also offer shoes and prêt-à-porter options that are equally as sophisticated as their handmade

counterparts. When designing for his brides, Sever's motto has always been to go glamorous or go home – regardless of price point. The spring 2023 showcase will follow suit, featuring sweeping cathedral trains, sheer corsetry and loads of floral lace appliqué.

"We spent too much time indoors wearing casual clothes, living through Zoom calls – now it's time we have a blast," the designer said.

With COVID-19 restrictions loosening, couples who prolonged their engagements due to the pandemic appear to feel the same way. A survey by the Wedding Report, a trade group that specializes in statistical analysis for the industry, predicts 2.47 million weddings will take place in 2022 – the most since 1984.

"Our industry has changed tremendously during the past two years with unpredictable customer behavior due to lockdowns," Sever said. "Surprisingly enough, the bridal market has proven to be resilient and [we are] very optimistic as real proof that love conquers all."



HERE AND BELOW: Renderings of Galia Lahav's New York flagship.



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Marquee Brands' Neil Fiske and Heath Golden.



The Ben Sherman store on Carnaby Street, London.



Martha Stewart recently launched a line of CBD products.

**BUSINESS**

# Marquee Brands Hires Heath Golden as It Creates Marquee 2.0

- The owner of BCBG, Martha Stewart and Body Glove is evolving its operating strategy to be more consumer-centric.

BY JEAN E. PALMIERI

The traditional licensing model is so...1999.

The days of brand owners just signing licensees for different categories and waiting for the royalty checks to roll in is no longer the best way to build a business.

Neil Fiske, chief executive officer of Marquee Brands, referred to that outdated strategy as Marquee 1.0. But since joining the company in September 2020 as its first CEO, Fiske has been working to create Marquee 2.0, a new operating model that centers around building the brands within its portfolio rather than simply owning them. Marquee manages a portfolio with \$3 billion in retail sales including Martha Stewart, BCBG Max Azria, Ben Sherman, Dakine, Sur La Table, Body Glove, Emeril Lagasse, Motherhood Maternity, A Pea in the Pod and Bruno Magli.

On April 18, Fiske will officially welcome an apparel industry veteran with a track record in digital, business and brand building to help him achieve his goal to create a more modern Marquee. That executive is Heath Golden, the former president and CEO of Hampshire Group and the current executive vice president, chief financial and strategy officer for Randa Apparel & Accessories.

Fiske himself was president and CEO of Gap Inc. before joining Marquee and, over the course of his career, also served as CEO of Billabong International, Eddie Bauer and Bath & Body Works.

Although Marquee has amassed a stable of well-known brands and built a profitable business since its founding by Neuberger Berman, a private equity investment firm, seven and a half years ago, Fiske envisions a lot of potential.

"I believe our existing portfolio can be two to three times the size without any other acquisitions," he said. "We have \$3 billion in total retail sales and will grow more than 20 percent this year. And we think we can also double our profitability year-over-year."

What's led to that optimism is the company's work over the past 18 months to address the changing consumer and retail landscape. He said the direct-to-consumer part of the business over the past two decades has been growing at some 18 to 19 percent annually and consumer phones have become the new flagship stores for most companies.

"In a traditional licensing model, everything gets pushed out [to licensees], but we wanted to pull everything together in a holistic experience with digital flagships," he explained.

So with Martha Stewart, for example, Marquee built Martha.com, which launched in September featuring a wide range of topics ranging from recipes, decorating and wellness tips to shopping links for kitchen, dining, food, wine and fashion.

Martha Stewart, which Marquee purchased along with Emeril Lagasse from Sequential Brands for \$175 million with an earn-out opportunity for an additional \$40 million in April 2019, has a lot of room for growth. Fiske believes Martha Stewart, which is currently a \$1 billion brand at retail, can easily grow to triple or quadruple that size. He pointed to her February launch of a chardonnay with Treasury Wine Estates and said the wine already ranks number one or two in its class. Ditto for her CBD brand, which is already the second most popular in that industry.

"Her ability to create, market and scale is incredible," Fiske said.

The Martha Stewart brand is part of Marquee's Home division, which also includes Lagasse and Sur La Table, a brand it picked up for \$89 million in August 2020. Fiske sees big potential for this culinary products brand because of the heightened focus on homes and families during the pandemic, a trend that continues today.

He sees the second biggest growth opportunity coming from Marquee's Motherhood division, which encompasses Motherhood Maternity and A Pea in the Pod, which it purchased in late 2019 for \$50 million.

Fiske sees further opportunity in Marquee's Active Outdoor brands, which include Body Glove and Dakine, a category that has also experienced unprecedented growth since the start of the pandemic. And with return to work and events, Marquee's fashion division – BCBG Generation, BCBG Max Azria, Ben Sherman and Bruno Magli – is benefiting from consumers updating their wardrobes.

"There's really no weak link," Fiske said. "We're staying focused on where we can win and making our brands bigger."

That's not to say that the company won't buy other businesses to add to its portfolio. Fiske said Marquee has "a good deal of dry powder for additional acquisitions" and expects to add one to two brands a year going forward.

"But the filter is different," he said. "We don't need to do a lot of deals to grow anymore. And any brand we buy needs to fit into the Marquee 2.0 model and be additive to the business." He pointed to Sur La Table as a "natural overlap" to Martha Stewart, as illustrative of his thinking.

Fiske described Marquee 2.0 as a collision of "media, content and commerce." Personalization, or providing "hyper-relevant content" to each customer, is a key component of this. Marquee is working to gather data from each consumer to ensure its communication is targeted to their specific needs. For instance, if a consumer goes to Martha Stewart to help plan their wedding, they can then be directed to Sur La Table for setting up their homes, BCBG for their bridesmaids' dresses and, eventually, A Pea in the Pod for their pregnancy needs.

"We've spent the last 18 months [evolving] Marquee from a brand licensing company into a brand accelerator," he said. "It's consumer-centric, digital first and d-to-c-led," he said, "which is a 180-degree change from the traditional licensing model."

While the ultimate goal is to sell product, he's taking a page from Martha Stewart's book where she preaches that the best way to build sales is to "teach, make and buy," he said. "It's easier to bring more brands into that platform."

In order to continue on the journey to create Marquee 2.0, Fiske recognized that he needed a strong number two – and that's where Golden comes in. "We've completed the foundational work and the company is growing, but to accelerate that, we needed someone of Heath's talent and leadership," he said.

Golden, whose title will be chief commercial and strategy officer, said he wasn't looking to change jobs but after meeting Fiske, he felt they were "kindred spirits" with the same vision of where the world is headed and how to capitalize on that potential growth. "The brands that win today are the ones that add value to your life," he said.

## BUSINESS

# Elite World Group CEO on Fashion Weeks, Diversity – and Julia Haart

● Barbieri discussed the network's successful run during the international fashion weeks and future prospects in the metaverse, as well as the lawsuit with Haart.

BY LUISA ZARGANI

**Elite World Group** has been under the spotlight ever since the divorce between owner Silvio Scaglia and “My Unorthodox Life’s” Julia Haart became public and hit the gossip columns. But chief executive officer Paolo Barbieri wants to turn attention away from the juicy personal drama and back to the agency's business, including its successful run throughout the fall fashion weeks.

“This was a strong season and the fashion weeks went extremely well for our talents and our agencies,” Barbieri told WWD. “We had over 350 models walk the runways globally, with over 120 walking in the Milan shows alone and 100 in Paris. We saw a major comeback season for Women New York,” the agency under the Elite World Group umbrella. “The business is coming out of the pandemic.”

Vittoria Ceretti, Mariacarla Boscono, Kendall Jenner, Majesty Amare, Adut Akech, Isabeli Fontana, Pleun Keijers and Loli Bahia are only some of the models represented by the agencies of the Elite World Group.

He was pleased to see that casting a diverse group of models has become a must across the board. “We’ve seen an incredible request for ethnic diversity and we are thrilled to see stars like Yumi Nu have a breakout season, walking for Altuzarra and appearing on Vogue Japan’s cover as the first Asian curve model. América González and Caren Jekemei, from Venezuela and Kenya, respectively, were two of the season’s top walkers, gracing over 30 runways each.”

Barbieri cited Anyier Anei, from Sudan, who made her exclusive debut with Versace and Chu Wong, “one of our most prolific appearances,” walking Loewe, Balmain, Isabel Marant, Hermès, Louis Vuitton and Chanel, among others. Avanti Nagrath, from India, debuted, opening Versace and walking for Bottega Veneta. Mamoor Majeng, from South Sudan, who’s signed across Elite globally, emerged as the top male model of the season, with 25 shows.

Inclusive sizing, however, is in most cases still perfunctory and asked to address this, Barbieri admitted that this remains “a technical issue for many brands” because of the cost of prototypes and samples that have to be created specifically, which is expensive.

Under the Elite World Group umbrella, which counts 4,000 talents under contract, are the following agencies: in Milan, Elite Milano and Women Management Milano; in Paris, Elite Paris, Women Management Paris and PGM Fashion and Brands; in New York, The Society Management, Women Management NY and EWG Management; in Los Angeles, Women Management LA and EWG Management. In Europe, in addition to Elite Milano, there are Elite agencies in London, Madrid, Barcelona, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Prague and Bratislava. In

Paris and New York there are also the Supreme and Women 360 agencies.

The minimum age limit set for models is 16 years old.

The group counts many Russian and Ukrainian models, and, asked about the steps taken in the wake of the war, Barbieri said the agency has been supporting them individually on a personal level, “given the strong relationships that are developed with the agents” and other key team members, and by making donations to specific charities.

Barbieri himself has developed strong relations with the Elite World Group over the years, first joining in 2013. As reported, when Haart was dismissed in February, he once again took on the CEO role, which he had passed on to Haart in 2019 to become deputy chairman. Haart rose to the CEO position from that of chief creative officer of Elite.

During his career, Barbieri held executive roles at Banca Akros, Pioneer Alternative Investments, MondoBiotech AG and Pacific Capital.

He has also served as a director of several fashion companies, including La Perla and luxury footwear brand Giuseppe Zanotti.

His objective is to return Elite World Group to profitability by the end of the year, after the bottom line was impacted by Haart’s alleged “crazy personal expenses in the millions.”

Earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization went from \$6 million in 2018 to a loss of \$6.1 million in 2019, the first year of Haart’s tenure as CEO and before the pandemic crisis; a loss of \$20.5 million in 2020, and a loss of \$10.4 million in 2021.

Barbieri expects revenues to total \$200 million in 2022, “a little more than before the pandemic,” he said.

A Delaware judge is expected to deliver a final decision on the ownership of Elite World Group around April 20, and Barbieri expressed confidence in the outcome.

He related that on March 25, the Court of Chancery of the State of Delaware issued a “status quo order” maintaining that Scaglia is the sole director of Freedom Holding Inc., which owns the international model agency and that Haart “holds no positions at either Freedom or EWG.”

Scaglia, who had donated some shares to Haart, continues to own more than 99 percent of the voting stock, and Haart less than 0.01 percent, Barbieri said. This contradicts a false claim made by Haart in a variety of public filings and media reports, he contended.

Haart was also meant to build a digital business during her tenure. However, digital revenues were nil in 2019, rose to \$1.6 million in 2020 compared with a budget of \$17.9 million and to \$8.8 million in 2021 versus a \$16.5 million budget, never reaching breakeven, despite an exceptionally positive trend in digital marketing expenses fueled by the pandemic crisis, he said. The digital division represented only 5 percent of the group’s revenues in 2021.

“Of course I believe in digital, but it cannot kill our core business, and it must be focused, celebrity-driven, and we can tell you what talent fits with your brand,” said Barbieri. “We are rebranding with a mission, using our talents and adjacent sectors, not merely shelling out data.”

He is also “convinced of the power of the metaverse, the development of hyper-realistic avatars in 3D. If I bring the models and talents in that world, we will always have an edge. New trends are always risky, but to pretend they don’t exist is to die. We can be leaders if we use our competitive advantage.”

Also, the E1972 fashion brand initiative launched by Haart has been terminated, failing to produce any result at all, Barbieri contended, while generating costs of around \$5 million a year.

The group is also revisiting the Elite Model Look contest, a key element for

brand awareness, he said. The agency receives 40,000 applications for the contest each year.

“It must be revitalized and revolutionized, adding new luster to it,” he claimed. “We are still mulling the future of the contest, but I’m thinking more in terms of a container of creativity, dealing with wannabe stylists and photographers, educating on mental health, well-being, correct eating habits.”

While applications and casting will continue to be digital, if the COVID-19 pandemic does not worsen the final is expected to be IRL later this year.



Adut Akech in the Valentino fall 2022 show.

## ACCESSORIES

# Eyewear Executives: Eyesight in Decline Due to Work-From-Home Culture

● Executives at the first in-person Vision Expo East trade show react to global circumstances and project increased need for eyewear.

BY MISTY WHITE SIDELL

The eyewear industry is continuing to rally amid global uncertainties. Executives for leading firms told WWD at last week's Vision Expo East – the first in-person edition since the pandemic began – that the overall industry forecast remains positive despite swirling global forces.

“This industry is generally insulated from economic issues,” said Angelo Trocchia, chief executive officer for the Safilo Group.

The near-term future of supply chains, transportation and key retail networks in China are uncertain due to escalating COVID-19 lockdowns there, which has also affected the return of travel retail. But executives said longer-term forecasts about eyewear demand paint a more important picture.

Most executives said they have observed data that predicts a massive global decline in eyesight due to an increased reliance on electronic screens – particularly owing to work-from-home culture. They expect this will create untold demand for optical frames and lenses, particularly those with upgrades like blue light lenses.

“I have heard stats that myopia will increase in significant numbers, not that we want to wish that on anyone, but it's a fact and seems to be an issue that could benefit us,” said Steve Wright, president and chief commercial officer for Safilo USA.

“It's a huge phenomenon from a social perspective, especially if you look at Asia, there is a probable number of people who will be needing this category that is going to be huge,” said Trocchia.

Marchon's chief marketing officer and senior vice president of brands Thomas Burkhardt added: “Certainly there is data available that looks at how professional video gamers need vision correction in their late 20s – there is a clear cause and effect.”

Marchon president Nicola Zotta said: “What we have seen with people working from home for a couple of years is a raised awareness of needing a proper prescription and blue light lenses.” He projected that the company is on track for “solid single-digit” growth in 2022, a relatively conservative estimate compared to global circumstances.

Eyewear's biggest players claim that roiling inflation is having a minimal effect due to the sheer size of their operations, but they are taking the current situation day-by-day.

“Having a bigger size helps companies be more effective in how they reach their distribution network and all of this is very helpful when you have tougher market conditions like inflation or a fluctuation in demand. Not all competitors survive though,” said Marcolin's newly appointed U.S. president Emanuele Cappellano.

He was more concerned about wider implications. “The transportation supply chain and raw material network is affected by fuel inflation and as a trend we see labor costs growing in North America, Europe and Asia,” he said, adding that Marcolin is monitoring the situation in China and how it relates to



Hailey Bieber x Vogue Eyewear.

the company's global supply chain.

Burkhardt countered though that, “despite inflation and purse strings being tighter, higher price points are doing well. There is still a spending statement.”

Zotta added: “Region by region we think Europe is in good shape, but has all-in-all been slower than anticipated because of the war. For Asia, we have to see what happens in China,” he said, and like most people noted a slow return of travel retail, which has cut into bottom-line projections. The recent cancellation of a major trade show in China has also had an effect.

“We need to start digesting that we are living in an inflation moment – we have been living the past three to four years with almost no inflation,” said Trocchia.

He is among eyewear's players to converge for the first time in years at New York City's Jacob K. Javits Center, at a show that's updated its concept to be more interactive and cheerful. While some booths doled out baked goods or had smoothie bars installed, the Vision Council also set up a puppy play pen in the middle of the show floor where attendees could play with dogs and ultimately purchase them (to the tune of thousands of dollars) if so inclined.

The lighter mood was in some ways indicative of eyewear's new prowess in the general accessories landscape. While never given the prominence of say, shoes or handbags, the pandemic's Zoom culture and wave of practicality has given eyewear a new edge.

“If you're an investor and see how resilient eyewear is to crisis, how we bounced back in eyewear versus other fashion accessories categories, this is very important. Not only is eyewear a healthy market but it's growing because there is a need,” said Trocchia.

Zotta said: “Eyewear is the object of significant focus, which is good news. Our customers are satisfied by our service and we are optimistic about the industry, we are solid and there has not been an impact on demand.” Marchon's parent company VSP recently retooled its branding and will be more front-facing in Marchon's own promotion.

Said Burkhardt: “VSP has 85 million members and it's nice for our licensors that we can represent their brand and access such a group of people, new licenses don't always know all of this.”

The eyewear industry has also benefited from an increased desire for statement-making frames. Current Zoom culture has emboldened consumers to choose frames that express a certain level of individualism, enabling eyewear companies to focus on creative designs that speak more to their individual brand licenses, rather than an overarching trend. While thick acetate frames remain popular, there is simultaneous appetite for bright colors, wire frames and athletic crossover styling.

Zotta said this is a good thing for companies that hold multiple eyewear licenses. “I don't think you have one single trend emerging. Now there are equally

cool trends. If I look at our collection now it's more diverse than it used to be, you don't have to switch a brand every 18 months and the brand can stand for something on its own,” he said of eyewear's new fashion rules.

Fabrizio Uguzzoni, president of wholesale for North America at EssilorLuxottica, added: “In the component of fashion, people are showing more of their face on Zoom. We are making sure all of our brands have their own DNA and have a very close relationship with the brands to interpret trends in a distinct way.”

The company has recently introduced lifestyle crossover designs from Oakley and will release a line of brightly colored Ray-Bans that come outfitted with lanyards that are made with music festival season in mind.

The company continues to maintain an eyewear license with Tiffany & Co. amid its global rebrand under new LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton leadership. To Uguzzoni, the relationship between Luxottica and Tiffany “has changed for the good.” Their license with Tiffany has several years left, Uguzzoni said.

“I don't know if it's the European component, but the relationship has gotten even better in terms of aligning. Our values around eyewear align with what they are doing, there is now a more fashion-forward approach while maintaining the heritage of the brand,” he said.



## FASHION

# Diesel Is Launching Sex Toys With Lelo

- The Italian fashion house has partnered with the Swedish intimate lifestyle products-maker for two co-branded stimulators.

BY MARTINO CARRERA

With its latest partnership, Diesel's tag line "for successful living" is getting a tongue-in-cheek makeover.

The fashion brand has teamed up with Lelo, a leading Stockholm-based company



The Diesel x Lelo collection of sexual wellness devices.

selling sex toys and other intimate lifestyle products, to develop a co-branded capsule of devices aimed at sexual wellness, marking the first time both brands have ventured in such a deal.

Two of Lelo's bestselling products, the Sona Cruise and Tor 2 stimulators, underwent a Diesel makeover. They were covered in the signature flashy red hue and bear catchphrases including "Turn me on"

and "All I need is a charge," as well as the Italian fashion company's logo in white.

Further nodding to Diesel's irreverent take on communication, the brand created a new version of its tag line reading "For sex-ful living," which is spelled out on the packaging.

"We at Lelo are pioneers and we are always happy to collaborate with like-minded brands, that is brands that inspire

and empower people to express their style. For this reason, the collaboration with Diesel came naturally as we found a partner that matches our philosophy," said Luka Matutinovi, chief marketing officer of the Swedish brand. "Our partnership with Diesel is crucial as it showcases a union between fashion and sex-tech and highlights how sexual wellness is seamlessly incorporated in our daily life. Just like a pair of jeans."

The collection debuting Wednesday will be available on Lelo's website, as well as in select Diesel flagship stores and online at the fashion brand's e-commerce. The devices retail at \$120 and \$150, respectively.

Although this partnership marks Diesel's most explicit stance on sexual wellness so far, the brand has already toyed with the subject and made sexual suggestion and innuendo a defining characteristics of its ad campaigns.

For instance, its spring 2021 ad campaign shone a light on the harsh reality of couples forced to stay apart during lockdowns and the joy of getting back together, which included sensual images of eight couples lensed by Cheryl Dunn.



Inside Borsalino's Bal Harbour pop-up shop.

## ACCESSORIES

# Borsalino Makes Debut in U.S. With Bal Harbour Pop-up

- The company's seasonal retail outpost is open through July, signaling its bet on the U.S. market.

BY MARTINO CARRERA

Borsalino is hitting the U.S. with its first retail outpost Stateside.

The storied hatmaker is opening a seasonal pop-up shop inside Miami's Bal Harbour luxury mall, which will remain open through the end of July.

The 753-square-foot space features backlit, beehive-like displays on the two side walls and central counters combining glass and wood. The subdued dove-gray space under soft lighting is peppered with panels bearing zebra patterns.

The move reflects the company's bet on the U.S. market, where it operated only

via wholesale until now. "The U.S. is very strategic for Borsalino with enormous potential that up until now had not yet been expressed," said Mauro Baglietto, the company's managing director.

"This first stand-alone pop-up represents an important part of our ongoing current retail and commercial development plan that also includes department stores as an area of growth. It also holds particular value due to the brand's long-standing and significant ties with America, a market which has historically appreciated and continues to appreciate our products," he added.

Case in point: After revamping its online shop in 2020, as part of Baglietto's plans to rejuvenate and inject newness in the 165-year-old company, Borsalino's e-commerce sales in the U.S. increased. "The platform was redesigned to offer users an engaging shopping experience

based on storytelling and the customer journey. Thanks to the redesign, we've seen increased and continual growth, especially in the U.S., that today represents our second-largest market," the executive said.

Throughout the summer 2022 season, the hatmaker plans to unveil several pop-ups along the lines of the Miami unit in key resort destinations overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. It will reprise its 2021 format that saw the brand touring luxury seaside locations with a three-wheel Piaggio Borsalino Ape car-slash-pop-up.

Baglietto said that the company is also planning special-edition products for its partners to strengthen tie-ups with retailers and further cement its newly rebooted positioning as a lifestyle brand, as suggested by licensing deals for leather goods and soft accessories inked last year.

The Miami opening is part of Borsalino's wider retail strategy aimed at bulking up

its international footprint.

Last month the company opened a flagship in Monte Carlo, building on the success of last year's summer pop-up in the city. Located on the first floor of the Metropole Shopping Monte-Carlo and covering 376 square feet, it joins the existing boutiques in central Milan, Paris, Rome and Mykonos, Greece, among others. The latter was inaugurated in 2021 alongside a unit at Milan's Linate airport.

Since joining the Haeres Equita-owned brand in 2020, Baglietto has masterminded Borsalino's reboot aimed at catering to a younger consumer base. This is in line with its owner's business plan for the company, set in motion after in 2018 it won the auction set up by the label's administrators with a deal valued at 6.4 million euros. The auction put an end to the brand's troubled journey that started in December 2015 when Haeres Equita first took over the hatmaker.



Farfetch's José Neves  
and Neiman Marcus'  
Geoffroy van Raemdonck.

## Farfetch, Neiman's Take On U.S. Luxury

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

expand the New York retailer's global reach. At home, the Bergdorf Goodman Fifth Avenue flagship will get Farfetch's New Luxury Retail treatment, bringing a greater connectivity to the experience of physical retail.

For Farfetch, the focus is on the U.S., which Neves said is at a "pivotal" moment after the COVID-19 pandemic reoriented consumers to the web, accelerating e-commerce penetration.

"It was a paradigm shift," Neves told WWD in a joint interview with van Raemdonck. "Many consumers that equated luxury with going to a physical store on Rodeo Drive or Fifth Avenue, during the past two years, they have really discovered the advantages and the pleasure of online shopping. Now that they've returned to stores, there's really an elevated expectation of the user journey."

Farfetch has been working on improving and digitally connecting the customer experience around the world and with mega partners. The platform – which connects boutiques, brands and big retailers with shoppers – has already linked with Alibaba and Tencent in Asia, the Chalhoub Group in the Middle East and Compagnie Financière Richemont and others in Europe. (Neves confirmed that he is still working on a potential deeper partnership with Richemont that could see Farfetch make an investment in the Yoox Net-a-porter business while forging other connections as well).

The deal raises certain questions, first whether Farfetch has the inside track on investing further in the NMG business and possibly one day taking it over. One financial source suggested "a series of step transactions" over time.

"This is a strategic investment so Neiman's can't be sold to anyone else. They can't sell themselves to Nordstrom or Saks," the source claimed.

But Neves told WWD, "We are not considering any form of M&A here. This is really about a strategic minority investment and developing a vision. We are very excited about the transformational nature of this deal for the companies involved and the customer."

Farfetch and Neiman Marcus are looking to the next five, 10 and 15 years to building for the future. But while the tech company is joining with Neiman Marcus' other owners – including Pimco, Davidson Kempner Capital Management, and Sixth Street – Neves said the plan is to build this partnership, not eventually stage a buyout.

The investment, Neves said, "aligns the interest on both sides and it allows Farfetch to benefit from the creation of value that we already think is happening with Neiman Marcus Group's incredible execution."

For Neiman Marcus Group, the deal represents the luxury company's biggest opportunity yet in technology and digital capabilities. NMG has been somewhat active in the tech sector, including having developed its proprietary Connect system, purchasing Stylize, and taking a minority stake in Fashionphile.

Another source questioned whether NMG's efforts to bolster its digital presence would come at the expense of the stores. However, van Raemdonck reiterated what he's said before, that NMG "firmly believes" luxury must be multichannel, with digital, brick-and-mortar and remote selling by associates.

He also nixed the idea of splitting NMG's digital and brick-and-mortar businesses into separate companies, which is what Saks Fifth Avenue did last year and other retailers have contemplated or have been under activist shareholder pressure to do so. "We believe that separating the assets is not in the best interests of the

customer experience," van Raemdonck said. "Today we are not anticipating the separation of assets."

The partnership with Farfetch, according to van Raemdonck, will sustain NMG's growth. "We have had 12 months of positive growth compared to 2019. It is accelerating this spring and it's a better performance in terms of margin rate or EBITDA rate than pre-COVID[-19]. This [deal] is about looking at how do we accelerate that growth further, and leveraging the best technology available. We have \$1.2 billion in available liquidity. With the investment, we have even more funds for growth, innovation and digital. Customers are expecting more digital engagement."

NMG generates more than a third of its total annual volume online, though van Raemdonck added that the split between digital and brick-and-mortar sales "is very difficult to really assess because our sales associates are doing remote selling and that's accounted for in the stores. We believe digital sales are bigger than the number I quoted, but if you look at what's sold on our dot-com properties, it's more than a third of our business."

Asked how the Bergdorf's website will change with Farfetch as a partner, van Raemdonck said: "The customer is going to continue to experience the BG curated assortment and the BG branded experience. But when you are on a technology platform that is much more agile and you can plug in different services, you can scale globally overnight with that turnkey solution. We currently only serve the U.S. customer, but we are going to new markets because Farfetch has the ability to translate – it has call centers, logistics and the knowledge of marketing in other geographies, so overnight we can bring this unique [B] experience, globally."

He said the replatforming of the BG website is "a matter of months, not years...We acquired Stylize, which is a machine-learning styling company that helps make recommendations so sometimes we acquire small companies, and sometimes we develop tools like Connect. But by being in this [new] relationship, we are always going to turn

to Farfetch as the preferred solution and provider of technology. Once you are on the platform, you can access all their services."

Connect is a digital tool for associates to personalize their communications with customers and communicate the way customers want, through either email, phone calls, or texting. Associates can also send photos depicting items and outfits and set up in-person appointments all through the Connect clienteling tool.

Van Raemdonck said the brand messaging and the experience provided by the Bergdorf website and app are "very strong, but being on the Farfetch platform will give us the ability to have more flexibility to make changes faster. The look and feel as it exists today doesn't change, but the ability to evolve that look and feel will be much better on the platform."

He also said the Bergdorf Goodman flagship in Manhattan "gets an increased role. We have always had the store as our flagship, now it becomes a global flagship and expression of the brand." He also said that by connecting better with customers digitally, when they do come to the store, associates are better prepared to know what the shopper wants and needs. Van Raemdonck has stated that one of his goals for Bergdorf's, once the parent NMG emerged from bankruptcy which it did last year, was to turn Bergdorf's into the premiere luxury fashion retailer in the U.S. though with a global reach based on e-commerce. The Farfetch deal should give him a boost toward achieving that goal.

Asked if the Neiman Marcus division would benefit from Farfetch's investment, van Raemdonck replied, "The partnership starts with the replatforming of bg.com. This is a multiyear partnership, for decades, but we need to do things sequentially, though ultimately we are going to look at any of their services that could be relevant to Neiman Marcus."

Neves said the U.S. is the only major market Farfetch hadn't tackled with the partnership approach that has the company striving to be a kind of "operating system" for the global luxury business.

"The U.S. is still the largest luxury market in the world," Neves said. "China is number two, some say China will be number one, but it doesn't matter. They will always be the top two markets in the world."

And Neves said younger consumers are proving to be a surprisingly strong component of the "very mature" market in the U.S.

"These new generations are driving a majority of the growth," he said. "These are generations that grew up hailing an Uber as opposed to hailing a taxi. This is a digital-first customer that is fueling the growth of online."

The trick for fashion companies seems to be showing up for that consumer in a compelling and connected way both online and IRL.

"We believe that physical stores are here to stay," said Neves, who bought London boutique Browns in 2015 and has been using it as a proving ground for new high-tech approaches to retail. "We believe that the experience in department stores has to be reinvented and really augmented by digital technologies."

Now Neiman Marcus, and particularly its Bergdorf Goodman business, is going to start to bear the stamp of the Farfetch vision.

"Department stores are going to have to digitize themselves very very quickly with best-in-class digital user journeys," Neves said. "And players like us are going to have to be bold and do partnerships that are far-reaching in terms of visions and that are long term."

# Fashion World Ramps Up Ukraine Relief

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

overseeing Zappos' couture business for more than seven years, helped her to create Angel For Fashion so swiftly. During that run at Zappos, couture sales boomed from \$15 million to \$100 million, she said.

To humanize the Ukrainian designers behind the labels there is biographical information and photographs of each. Angel For Fashion is coordinating getting the assets of two brands, Syndicate and Riot Division, whose respective owners are defending Ukraine. One of the featured designers, Valery Kovalska, is temporarily staying with Sidary in Los Angeles.

All of the Ukrainian designers are working to set up production outside of Ukraine and several of them have transported most of their merchandise from Kyiv to other parts of the country. "They are diligently carrying on even during the war, which is incredible," Sidary said, adding that live inventory and select pre-sale items are being offered.

Developing a multibrand Ukrainian site was something that Sidary had been interested in doing since she first started exploring the sector in December 2020. Once orders are placed on Angel For Fashion, the brands will contact the consumers to let them know when the product will ship. A local shipper in Ukraine, Nova Poshta, is still handling ground shipments in the country and is coordinating deliveries to other countries with companies like DHL, FedEx or UPS.

Consumer interest is high for Ukrainian-made labels, according to a recent survey by Lovethesales.com. There has been an 809 percent surge in fashion demand for blue and yellow clothing and a 306 percent increase in searches for "Ukraine clothing," as well as a 100 percent gain in fashion demand for camouflage printed clothing, based on the survey.

"The Ukrainian fashion industry is about 80 percent women. Most of the women are out of the country and it is a little bit easier to set up production outside of Ukraine. Since they were so well-established, they still have some money," Sidary said. "Of course, it is running out quickly. I felt if people had an opportunity to support this industry directly, this would be the way to go."

From her viewpoint, supporting designers and the Ukrainian fashion industry directly through purchases will strengthen their existing and future businesses, as well as their employees, "who are either still in the country or are refugees finding a new place to live in the world."

Plans are going forward for the Kyiv Art and Fashion Days, which is scheduled for New York in September. The founders of six designer labels from Ukraine – Frolov, Gudu, Valery Kovalska, Elena Burenina, Lilia Litkovskaya and Lake Studio Situationist – will showcase their collections, gain industry advice, network and meet with media as a means to sustain their businesses. Fashion designer Keanan Duffy, who attended Kyiv Art and Fashion Days last fall in Ukraine, has conceptualized the New York event. Sofia Tchkonina, founder of the original festival, is overseeing the U.S. edition.

The three-day event will include a runway show at Sony Hall in partnership with Runway 7. Mastercard is providing its NYC Tech Hub space for a temporary showroom and the Council of Fashion Designers of America will feature the participating Ukrainian designers' collections on its Runway360 site as part of the group's official New York Fashion Week coverage.

Duffy and co-collaborator Mary Gehlhar are still working on a partnership with



Riot Division's founder Oleg Moroz is now defending Ukraine.

a Ukrainian aid organization to accept donations that will cover travel and hotel expenses for the designers. With the situation changing day-to-day, Duffy noted the disparate situations that the designers are facing at home and abroad. Frolov's founder Ivan Frolov, for example, has been sort of drafted into the military, he said.

"We will go forward with this endeavor with the hope that these designers will be able to leave Ukraine and come to New York to stage this show. That depends on the outcome of this war and the freedom to travel that those designers may or may not have. But we're going forward with the idea that this is providing a beacon of hope and all of the designers have said that," Duffy said.

As for what people who haven't traveled to Ukraine will be missing about the country, Duffy said, "There's not really a concept of what Ukraine is. Obviously, people see the devastation and the loss of life, and what appears to be war crimes happening. It's unbelievable that this is happening in the 21st century. But certainly from our standpoint in the U.S., it seems like it's over there. Having been there, you have a very different perspective. We saw tremendous entrepreneurialism, creativity in expression. In the U.S., we kind of see Ukraine as part of that Soviet bloc. I really had the total opposite experience. I saw positivity and hope from creatives and designers, and a very defined Ukrainian culture with the heritage of that being utilized by designers in a very contemporary way."

For non-visitors to Ukraine, it would be hard to imagine the destruction, what has been obliterated and what Russian President Vladimir Putin is trying to obliterate, "which is the spirit and soul of the country," Duffy said. "People are seeing this amazing vitality and strength of the [Ukrainian] people and the culture to resist this onslaught, it probably would have been in some ways easier to just lay down their arms and say, 'OK, fine.'

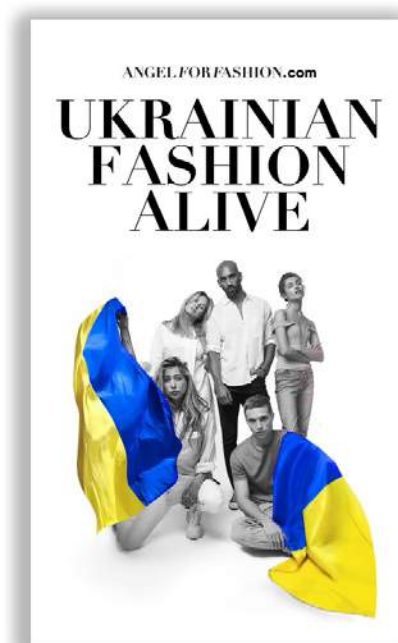
But they didn't do that. That courage of conviction was what I saw when I was there. There were designers doing something really great on par with Paris, London, New York. And very proud of their own culture and heritage."

Faced with round-the-clock images and updates of how the ongoing conflict is impacting people in Ukraine, and in some instances has ravaged communities like Bucha and Mariupol, some fashion and design-leaning professionals are seeking to contribute in different ways. Kenneth Cole is among the brands donating a portion of its e-commerce profits to a humanitarian nonprofit, by using the ShoppingGives tech plug-in. Meanwhile, Capri – parent of Michael Kors, Versace and Jimmy Choo – this week revealed plans to donate over 1 million euros of essential clothing to those impacted by the war.

On April 2, the Brownstone Cowboys Apartment Stoop Sale was held on East 32nd Street in Manhattan with 100 percent of the proceeds going to Ukrainian refugees. Fifty to 60 people turned up, according to the event's organizer Heathermary Jackson, who is founder of the magazine and vintage e-tailer Brownstone Cowboys and a stylist represented by The Wall Group.

The gathering was inspired by freelance photographer and TikTok-er Valeriia Shashenok, who had been chronicling the war in Ukraine until recently and continues to support her town of Chernihiv. When she decided to leave the country, Jackson bought her a \$500 flight to Warsaw, then lined up bus transportation to Milan and for Shashenok to stay with Plan C's founder.

Another inspiration for Saturday's Brownstone Cowboys sale was a Ukrainian family now living in New York. After Jackson asked a few friends to donate vintage clothing for them, some over-generous ones like Michael Stipe provided an abundance of clothing, which led to last weekend's sale. Nearly



An image from the Angel for Fashion site.

\$3,000 was raised for relief efforts and a percentage of proceeds from Brownstone Cowboys merchandise are still being tallied. Photographer Myles Loftin, makeup artist Romy Soleimani, photographer and hair stylist Conrad Dornan donated items, too. Jo Rosenthal handled a bake sale, Alaric Flowers donated posey arrangements to sell, Gia Coppola provided some wine and a small distillery offered a whiskey drink.

"It just ended up being a really lovely day. It really felt that people were there for the reason that we did it to raise money for the Ukrainians," Jackson said. "It just felt like a real community, family affair," Jackson said.

On track to raise \$5,000 in total, an online auction is being considered as part of future events that will raise awareness about refugees and other social justice issues. The aim is for Shashenok to use her viral fame for a wider audience perhaps through the United Nations HCR, which Jackson's friend Helena Christensen is involved with. The idea "is to have Valeriia be more of a face of someone, who is going to fight for all refugees," Jackson said.

The hope is to do monthly events focused on helping specific groups such as the transgender community.

Meanwhile, Lutz Morris is donating \$10 for every bag sold to support the estimated 80,000 women in Ukraine who are expected to give birth in the next three months. The Berlin-brand is coordinating with the Christy Turlington-founded nonprofit Every Mother Counts.

Separately, the U.S.-based, Ukrainian-born designer Nataliya Nova is selling original paintings and designs from her signature label's scarves to help raise money for the people of Ukraine. The designer said she is trying to link up with a couple of stylists and celebrities to start fundraising with their help.

Representatives for Ukrainian brands like J'amemme, Kulakovsky, Marianna Senchina, Lake Studio, Gudu, Ienki Ienki and Santa Brands are working to raise awareness and boost production. Despite the Russian invasion, Kachorovska and Kseniaschnaider launched collaborative ankle boots as planned late last month. The campaign for it shows a woman on the road and at home. "How accurate it looks now, when the only thing every Ukrainian woman wants is to return home," a company spokeswoman said.

Another Ukrainian label, Norba, recently unveiled its spring collection – a month later than planned – but the brand is hopeful for a steady return to production and global sales.

## FASHION

## Fashion Designer Elena Reva Says Ukraine Is Her Life

- The Ukrainian designer is living temporarily near Munich and is trying to shift production to Bulgaria.

BY ROSEMARY FEITELBERG

Despite the barrage of coverage of the war in Ukraine, many would be hard-pressed to imagine how the country's businesses are managing to go forward.

Fashion designer Elena Reva is among the more than 10 million people who have left their homes in Ukraine, either fleeing to another country or to elsewhere in that nation. As of Monday, there had been 3,527 civilian casualties in the country — 1,430 have been killed and 2,097 have been injured since the Russian Federation's invasion started on Feb. 24, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

During an interview Tuesday, Reva described how her life has been upended in the past six weeks but she is determined to keep her signature company running. Her label is among the 30 Ukrainian brands that are now being sold via the just-launched e-commerce site [Angelfor-fashion.com](https://angelfor-fashion.com).

Beyond the logistics of trying to aid employees in Ukraine, shift production and retrieve inventory, Reva is facing more severe challenges. "My heart is broken

because a lot of people have died including children and women. I'm crying even talking to you," she said.

On Feb. 25 in the midst of the "very terrible situation" with many military helicopters overhead, the designer decided to relocate to western Ukraine with friends. Additional stops in other European countries followed before Reva reunited with her husband and settled into a friend's home outside of Munich. After leaving western Ukraine, she first traveled to Hungary to reconnect with her husband, the coach of the Ukrainian national football team, who was in Tokyo when the war broke out. The couple then went to Croatia and Slovenia before deciding to move temporarily to Germany.

Reva is in the process of trying to move her company's pattern making, production and all operations to Bulgaria, where she has good connections with factories there. The plan is to develop a little stock to continue the business. Most of her 14 full-time employees are still in Ukraine, aside from a few who have moved to Poland and the Czech Republic. "I'm trying to help them now with some medicine and food. Of course, it is such a difficult situation. Our team is trying to continue to work, but now it is so difficult," she said.

Despite the upheaval and uncertainty, Reva hopes to return to Ukraine to live, "because I like my country, my city and everything that I have in Ukraine. This is my life and I can't live without it. I hope that everything will be ok and I will go home."

That said, given the invasion, Reva said she "has to find a solution to continue my brand. We are trying to get all of my stock and to have an event here to earn some money to help us to continue our business."

As for outsiders' views of the war in Ukraine, Reva said in Germany everyone understands the situation exactly. "I don't know how it is possible to not understand. Only in Russia are people saying that you are confused about the situation," she said. "Everyone I have met understands about this terrible situation.

Ukrainian designer Elena Reva has temporarily relocated to Germany.



"Right now our future depends on one person [referring to Russian President Vladimir Putin]. But I believe in our country, the Ukrainian people and in our army, but it will take some time," the designer said. "For now, we have to be strong and help each other. We have to be like one family in Ukraine. That helps us."

Noting how in Germany strangers have been so friendly and willing to help with a lot of things, Reva acknowledged how more countries have opened their borders to Ukrainian refugees and are coordinating with some of them to help relocate their businesses. "That's a very good practice

when different countries help us," she said.

Without question additional assistance is needed from other countries to support the Ukrainian army and the people, who are still living in Ukraine, especially those in need of housing, food, medicine and everything else, Reva said. "A lot of countries are helping us and we are happy for that. I believe we will win and everything will stop in the near future because we have strong people, a very strong army and Ukrainian people have big hearts. I believe in our future and that Ukraine will be a new country and free from this Russian system."

## BUSINESS

## Chanel Blocks Sales to Russian Passport Holders, But Not in China

- As of Tuesday, it appears that the retail team in China was never instructed to ask Russian nationals to sign any declarations before making any purchases.

BY TIANWEI ZHANG

LONDON — While Chanel is restricting sales to overseas Russians in Europe, the Middle East and North America because of its invasion of Ukraine, it appears that Russians in China, a nation that has not yet imposed any sanctions on Russia, are not required to sign any papers when shopping at Chanel, according to salespeople working at the brand's stores there.

A sales associate, who requested anonymity, told WWD that as of Tuesday, the retail team was never instructed to ask Russian nationals to sign any declarations before making a purchase. In China, there are a considerable number of Russians living and working in cities like Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Hong Kong, where Chanel has a retail presence. In theory, they can act as shopping proxies

to help those in Russia buy from Chanel without a problem.

Over the weekend, Chanel was once again caught up in controversy as wealthy Russians, who fled to places like Turkey and Dubai to continue their luxury lifestyles, found out they are no longer welcomed at Chanel in those countries.

Lisa Litvin, a Russian interior designer at Partners Pro, was among the first to share her in-store experience.

"I went to a Chanel boutique in the Mall of the Emirates. They didn't sell me the bag because (attention!) I am from Russia," she wrote on Instagram last Friday.

She was told that Chanel "has a new order that they only sell after I sign a piece of paper saying that I won't wear this bag in Russia," and she has to provide ID details and a Russian phone number.

"Next, the manager said that starting from today they were selling to Russians only if they sign an agreement not to wear their items in Russia," she added.

Her Instagram account has been private since Monday.

Fashion show presenter Anna Kalashnikova claimed that Chanel refused to sell her earrings and a bag in Dubai because she is a Russian celebrity.

She also claimed a manager at the store told her that, "We know you'll be taking purchases to Russia, so we can't sell our brand's items."

Russian influencer Yana Rudkovskaya, the wife of Olympic figure skating champion Alexander Plyushenko, who is said to have spent more than 1 million euros at Chanel over the years, said the ban is "somewhat humiliating."

"This is a shock for a woman who's been buying Chanel and Chanel Haute Couture for more than 20 years, and who sat at its shows in the front row," she added.

Maria Zakharova, Moscow foreign ministry spokeswoman, later accused Chanel of joining "the Russophobic campaign to cancel Russia."

In a statement sent to WWD, Chanel said "the most recent EU and Swiss sanction laws include a prohibition on the 'sale, supply, transfer or export, directly or indirectly, of luxury goods to any natural or legal person, entity or body in Russia or for use in Russia.' Under the applicable EU sanctions, this prohibition applies to luxury goods listed insofar as their value exceeds EUR 300 per item (CHF 300 under the CH sanctions)."

"This is why we have rolled out a process to ask clients for whom we do not know the main residency to confirm that the items they are purchasing will not be used in Russia. We recognize that this process of walking through the law has caused disappointment to some of our clients.

"We are currently working on improving this approach and we apologize for any misunderstanding this may have caused,



Shoppers wearing surgical masks abide by social distancing measures and line up to enter a Chanel store in the Admiralty district of Hong Kong.

as welcoming all our clients, regardless of where they come from, is a priority for Chanel," the brand added.

Since the beginning of March, luxury players including LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, Hermès, Kering and Chanel have "temporarily" closed their stores in Russia in response to the escalating situation, although in some cases they continue to wholesale there.

Chanel at the time said it would no longer deliver to Russia.

"We will close our boutiques and we already suspended our e-commerce," the company wrote. "The safety of our employees is our priority and we remain closely connected to our local teams who we will continue to support."

# In Focus: Business Insights

## CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

### KPMG Consumer Metaverse Study Indicates Enormous Potential, Enthusiasm

- It is estimated that 70 percent of brands will have a presence in the metaverse in the next five years.

BY ALEXANDRA PASTORE

While new applications of augmented reality might seem as surreal as the trailers for the upcoming Marvel movie, "Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness," the metaverse is more grounded, and safe. For brands, it offers a captured audience and seemingly endless new possibilities to engage.

According to a new consumer pulse survey report from KPMG, called "Go boldly, not blindly, into the metaverse: enabling a new consumer world," nearly two-thirds of consumers are now familiar with the metaverse and, what's more, they're ready to interact.

Breaking down awareness, KPMG's survey found 71 percent of males are familiar with the metaverse compared to 59 percent of female consumers. Awareness did trend higher from younger generations with 86 percent of Gen Z and 81

percent of Millennials reporting they are familiar with the metaverse.

With this in mind, the authors of the report said, "more likely than not, a big part of your customer base is already embracing the metaverse and is comfortable interacting virtually." Put simply, by entering the metaverse, a company is meeting consumers where they are.

Moreover, just under half (46 percent) of consumers agree "the metaverse can provide a forum to interact with friends in a way that is as meaningful as in person" and 44 percent of respondents agree that "engaging with friends in the metaverse is an authentic way of interacting."

For consumer and retail organizations, authors of the report said they are "limited only by the imagination" as they get ready to "take advantage of new business opportunities and selling channels" and win by developing a strategy for this market. In the luxury sector specifically, KPMG predicts tremendous growth opportunities, citing industry analysts who predict the growing demand for luxury goods in the metaverse could reach \$50 billion by 2030.

Almost 60 percent of luxury consumers

surveyed by KPMG reported they are participating on a metaverse platform – many of these platforms feature personalized avatars to reflect unique identities. "Luxury brands can offer digital products and services that help shape these identities – driving new revenue streams, testing new product innovations, increasing loyalty with existing customers and acquiring new customers," authors said of the report.

Still, partnering with video games is just one way into the metaverse.

Underscoring the importance of continuing to provide an authentic, meaningful experience, KPMG notes it is important to ask the right questions to

determine strategy:

- How are consumers engaging in the metaverse now?
- What is my brand strategy for the metaverse? What is it worth to my brand?
- Can you create an immersive experience?
- How will the decentralized internet improve customer engagement?
- What needs to be considered to address the data protection and privacy?
- Who will build your virtual kingdom?

Ultimately, the metaverse is still being built. The urgency, KPMG said in its report, should be placed on figuring out your brands impact on the metaverse and how it is impacting your brand rather than immediate execution.



Forty-four percent of respondents agree that "engaging with friends in the metaverse is an authentic way of interacting."

## CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

### First Insight Report Reveals 'Fundamental' Differences Between U.S., U.K. Shoppers

- The research did show, however, alignment in regard to spending more on sustainable products.

BY ARTHUR ZACZKIEWICZ

While the latest consumer research from First Insight Inc. showed shoppers in the U.K. and the U.S. are aligned in their support of sustainable brands, their reasons for doing so differed.

The comparison report also showed stark differences between U.K. and U.S. consumers in regard to sustainable shopping preferences.

First Insight found 30 percent of U.K. respondents "shop sustainable brands in order to reduce their carbon footprint or, nearly equally (29 percent), to reduce production waste [while] only 22 percent of U.S. consumers rated those answers as reasons to shop sustainable brands."

The report also showed 57 percent of U.K. consumers polled sell products in the secondhand markets "while fully 61 percent of U.S. respondents do not sell items to secondhand markets." First Insight noted that on a generational basis, "40 percent more U.K. Gen Z sell to resale platforms such as ThredUp or Tradsey than their U.S. counterparts, with nearly 30 percent more U.K. Millennials than U.S. Millennials doing the same."

There was one clear area of alignment,

though: shoppers from both countries said they are willing to pay more for sustainably made products.

The research was based on a survey of more than 1,100 consumers in the U.K. and U.S. Other notable differences were found in consumer perspectives of online shopping. First Insight found 80 percent of U.K. consumers "believe too much packaging accompanies online purchases compared to only 71 percent of U.S. consumers."

And U.K. consumers were also found "to be more skeptical and demanding on

transparency than those in the U.S.," the authors of the report said, noting that only 49 percent of U.K. consumers "believe that retailers and brands are sufficiently transparent around their sustainability efforts" compared to 59 percent in the U.S. Furthermore, 82 percent of consumers in the U.K. expect retailers to be more sustainable compared to just 76 percent in the U.S.

Greg Petro, chief executive officer of First Insight, said in "a world where global commerce is quickly becoming the norm, geographical nuances must be understood

in order for brands and retailers to remain competitive. A cookie-cutter approach to producing, marketing and selling sustainable products will no longer work for brands and retailers across borders. It's critical, especially with ESG priorities, that brands understand how to communicate effectively with their communities."

Digging down into the results also showed differences among respondents in regard to defining and prioritizing sustainable products. "Interestingly, the very definition of sustainability differs between U.K. and U.S. consumers, even among Gen Z consumers," First Insight said, adding that overall, the greatest percentage of both countries' consumers "believe that sustainability means products made from recycled, sustainable and naturally harvested fibers and materials."

However, when looking at generational demographics, 48 percent of U.S. Gen Zers "define sustainability as sustainable manufacturing, while only 28 percent of their U.K. Gen Z counterparts agree." The authors of the report said although U.K. consumers do not rank sustainability as highly as a purchase consideration as U.S. consumers do, "both sets of consumers agree that sustainability is more important to them than the brand name. In fact, U.K. consumers rank the importance of brand name even lower than U.S. consumers do, with 49 percent of consumers in the U.K. saying it matters versus 56 percent in the U.S."



The research showed that shoppers from the U.K. and U.S. said they are willing to pay more for sustainably made products.



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MacKenzie Porter



# Canadian Singer MacKenzie Porter Sets Her Sights on the U.S.

The country artist had a monster hit with Dustin Lynch on “Thinking ‘Bout You.”

BY JEAN E. PALMIERI PHOTOGRAPH BY LEXIE MORELAND

**MacKenzie Porter** has never met Shania Twain, but she’d love to follow in her footsteps.

Much like her Canadian counterpart, Porter is a star in her native country with three consecutive number-one singles – the first female artist since Twain to notch that accomplishment – and a successful acting career with her role in the sci-fi series “Travelers” on Netflix. Her 2020 wedding to actor Jacob Etheridge was even featured in *People* magazine.

Even so, she has yet to make her mark in the U.S. – but she’s well on her way. Her single with Dustin Lynch, “Thinking ‘Bout You,” had a six-week stint at the top of the country charts and put Porter on the map in America.

“I’m trying to grind it out in Nashville and the U.S. and starting at a different level,” she says. “It’s definitely weird. I live in Nashville now, so when I go home to Canada, it’s like this big confidence boost because I get to play really big shows. Honestly, it’s probably good for my mental health because I can gain confidence in Canada and then get a little dose of reality here. But things have been building really nicely.”

That momentum was starting to build when the pandemic hit and Porter’s plans to release a single to country radio were brought to a screeching halt. “I had a single, it was going to be this big year

for me – and then everything halted,” she says. Because she’d only made it through half of her planned radio tour, her record label said she’d have to wait for the pandemic to be over before releasing the song.

She was disappointed but when she got a call a few months later asking if she’d like to audition for a duet with Lynch, she jumped at the chance. She recorded her part, as did a number of other singers, and waited to hear.

“We went into the studio, I cut a vocal that I felt really confident about and then I didn’t hear anything for months. Then one day, Dustin followed me on Instagram and I told my team, ‘I think this means I’m going to do the song,’” she recalls. “And they’re like, ‘No, it definitely doesn’t, chill out.’ Then again, I didn’t hear anything, but a couple of weeks after that, he called and asked if I would be on it.”

The song is a crowd pleaser at Porter’s concerts, where she performs her Canadian hits and tackles “Thinking ‘Bout You” alone. But she will be able to perform it with Lynch a few times this summer when they play some festivals together with Sam Hunt. And a busy summer it will be. She plans to play some shows in Australia and is also on the verge of finalizing “a really cool fall opening slot,” she said.

Beyond that, she hopes to soon release that long-awaited single to country radio. “I cut two new songs in the studio and we think we have our single out of this batch. Obviously, it needs to start reacting online before we go to radio with it, but we feel really good about it.”

And Porter believes she can finally “make it” in the States. “I’m confident, and maybe that’s delusional, but I really do believe I will, which is why I’ve been working on it for so long. I will be the first person to say that technically, I’m not Ariana Grande, but when I sing, it sounds honest.”

That honesty and relatability also connected with Nasty Gal, which is bringing her on board as an ambassador and will release an assortment called the MacKenzie Collection early this month in what marks Porter’s first fashion partnership.

“I’m playing all these shows and I’m at the level right now where we’re building,” Porter says. “So I have to get clothes I can afford and still look cool on stage. Nasty Gal is a company that I have shopped for years, they reached out to us and the partnership developed.”

Porter admits to being a real fashion lover, as evidenced by her shoot with WWD at the Moxy Times Square hotel, where she worked with stylist Krista Roser and selected two different looks:

a fire engine red ensemble by RVN and an all-white outfit from Brandon Maxwell.

“I grew up in the middle of nowhere in Canada on a cattle and bison ranch,” she says. “My parents are not into fashion. My dad’s the kind of guy who will get a free T-shirt from the local RV dealer and that’s what he’ll wear. But since I was a little kid, I was always enthralled with magazines and just loved the fashion side of things and bringing that into country music. Sometimes that’s an area that’s missing a bit in this industry. I love designers but I also love Zara and Urban Outfitters, more accessible stuff that I can afford when I don’t have a stylist and it’s just me.”

As her career progresses, Porter may be able to dabble more in designer merchandise, but she’s fine to mix it up a bit until that time comes. And she’s determined to do everything she can to replicate her success in Canada in the U.S.

“If there’s anything else I felt strongly about or could do, I probably would because this is a hard industry, but this is the one thing that I know in my heart I’m supposed to be doing,” she says. “My path hasn’t been an upward trajectory the whole time, that’s what entertainment is, but I don’t know if I would do anything else, I can’t, I’m not good at anything else.”



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# Fashion Scoops



Kim Jones

## California Dreaming

Itinerant fashion shows are back in earnest — and Kim Jones is feeling the wanderlust, too.

The British designer plans to unveil his spring 2023 men's collection for Dior in Los Angeles on May 19, WWD has learned.

The venue, timing and other details are still under wraps.

Dior confirmed the California showing, and highlighted the French house's long ties to the U.S., which date back to the founder Christian Dior. Shortly after his first show in 1947, "the New Look set out to conquer the world, and America was first to succumb, igniting a friendship that has continued to grow ever since," the house said in a brief statement.

Dior also plans to participate in the next Paris Fashion Week for menswear, and will parade its summer 2023 collection by Jones in the French capital.

Last December, Jones paid tribute to "On the Road" author Jack Kerouac by taking his pre-fall collection for Dior menswear to London. Alongside the show was an exhibition of rare books and manuscripts from Jones' personal collection.

A formidable globetrotter, Jones has visited more than 100 countries. He often travels in search of rare wildlife and is a discreet supporter of multiple conservation charities. The designer took his first trip to Ecuador when he was three months old, and by age four, he had been all over Africa with his family.

Destination shows are heating up, especially for the resort season, with Chanel heading to Monaco and Louis Vuitton to a yet-unnamed venue of architectural importance in California.

In addition, Gucci has earmarked May 16 for a coed show to be held somewhere in Europe, while Pucci is to unveil the first designs by its new artistic director Camille Miceli on April 29 in Capri. — MILES SOCHA

## The Winners Are...

In an effort to support greater visibility for Black creators across fields of design, artist Theaster Gates and Prada Group have named the first cohort of creatives set to participate



Catherine Sarr, founder of fine jewelry brand Almasika, and a member of the inaugural Experimental Design Lab cohort.

in the Dorchester Industries Experimental Design Lab.

Catherine Sarr, founder of fine jewelry brand Almasika, and a member of the inaugural Experimental Design Lab cohort.

The 14 awardees who will participate in the three-year design incubator program were formally named at an event Tuesday evening at Rebuild Foundation's Stony Island Arts Bank on Chicago's South Side, where the lab's hub will be located. The program is a collaborative effort between Gates' art and neighborhood transformation platform Rebuild Foundation, the design and manufacturing arm of his studio, Dorchester Industries, as well as Prada.

The Experimental Design Lab cohort includes fashion designer Tolu Coker; footwear designer Kendall Reynolds; fine jewelry designer Catherine Sarr; Germane Barnes, Mariam Issoufou Kamara and Maya Bird-Murphy, who are doing work in architectural design; product designer Norman Teague; a dance company led by Kyle Abraham; visual artist Kenturah Davis; fine artist Brandon Breaux; Salome

Asega who's working in art, technology and design; graphic designer Summer Coleman; chef Damarr Brown, and Yemi Amu, who's doing creative work in agriculture.

Financing over the course of the program will allow the creators to develop and scale existing work, as well as provide room for innovation. Apart from sharing their work locally in Chicago, the cohort will participate in annual activations — including retreats and publicly accessible events — in New York City and Los Angeles to foster greater exposure. More info on the Experimental Design Lab and its ongoing efforts can be found at [Dorchesterindustries.com](http://Dorchesterindustries.com).

"At the end of the day, if the talented designers in this cohort are supported to create new work imaginatively, unencumbered by finances and inspired by their fellow cohort members, this program was an astounding success," Gates told WWD. "My greatest hope is that the world takes note of their talent and that thought leaders leverage their resources to invest in and amplify the work of rising designers of color further."

— TARA DONALDSON

## ON THIS DAY

A thoughtful and observant Stephen Burrows opened up to pioneer fashion journalist Elsa Klensch about his life in design, his home and his famous friends, as seen in WWD on April 6, 1972.

— Jasper Brown



Shinola on Abbot Kinney Boulevard.

## Shinola's New License

Shinola has signed a multiyear eyewear license with Marchon. The two companies unveiled the deal on Wednesday under which Marchon will oversee the design, production and global distribution of Shinola optical eyewear and sunglasses.

The first designs will be released in the fall of 2022 in the U.S. and Canada, with styles made available at select retailers and on Shinola's website.

All of the eyewear will utilize Marchon's proprietary Flexon material, which allows frames to be bent or twisted without damage. An initial range of men's and unisex styles will include six optical designs and five sunglasses. Most of the designs take inspiration from key Shinola watch collections.

Marchon president Nicola Zotta said the company is "thrilled to partner with Shinola, a distinct brand that will fit well into our portfolio. We look forward to offering new eyewear styles that will complement our Flexon technology and stand out to customers who are looking for frames designed with expert, quality craftsmanship."

Shinola's vice president of creative design Ruthie Underwood added: "Shinola is known for classic design that proves to be distinctive and timeless, whether we're styling watches, leather bags or home accessories. We're excited to extend our legacy for delivering high-quality manufactured goods to eyewear consumers who treat their glasses as a meaningful symbol of who they are and aspire to be." — MISTY WHITE SIDELL

## Special Car

The last chapter of Project Maybach, the late Virgil Abloh's collaboration with Mercedes-Benz Group chief design officer Gordon Wagener, has been revealed.

The electric luxury show car, which was unveiled in Miami last December shortly after Abloh's

death, will be put into a limited run of production as Mercedes-Maybach S-Class S680. Only 150 will be manufactured.

Made by the German carmaker's customization and craftsmanship team in Sindelfingen, the model's exterior features the same two-tone color combination, with the upper part of the vehicle lacquered in a glossy black and the lower part painted in a sand hue. The interior also follows the bicolor scheme.

Each car will also come with a bespoke user interface, a car cover and a custom-made wooden box covered in napa leather emblazoned with the Mercedes-Maybach and Virgil Abloh logos, containing a 1/18 scale replica of the car, car keys and a carabiner hook.

The release of the car will coincide with the release of an Off-White capsule collection designed by Abloh. Featuring logo T-shirts, hoodies, gloves, baseball caps and balaclavas, the capsule will be available on the brand's online store, selected retailers and Farfetch. — TIANWEI ZHANG ▶



Limited-edition  
Maybach by  
Virgil Abloh.

## Helping Hand

**Veronica Beard** will host a "Make It Happen" event in Miami on Wednesday.

The event will include a panel discussion at the ZZ's Club in the Miami Design District moderated by Veronica Swanson Beard and Veronica Miele Beard, cofounders and codesigners of the brand. The sisters-in-law will be having a conversation with model and entrepreneur Karolína Kurková, Karla Martinez, the editorial director of Vogue Mexico and Latin America, and Alexandra Wilkis Wilson, the cofounder of Gilt Group and Glam Squad.

Among those slated to attend are Katie Sturino, Jessica Wang, Liv Perez, Melodie Monroe and Arlenis Sosa, among others.

In addition, Beard has launched its second-quarter #VBGivesBack partnership with the International Rescue Committee in support of the more than 4 million refugees who have been forced to flee Ukraine, as well as other refugees around the world displaced by conflict and disaster.

Following the panel discussion, the attendees will be invited to return to the Veronica Beard store in Miami's Design District on Thursday, where 10 percent of all in-store sales will be donated to the IRC as part of the first #VBGivesBack Day. The event will be hosted by the Beards. In addition, #VBGivesBack days will be held at all 16 Veronica Beard stores nationwide. Through the end of June, a donation from each veronicabeard.com order will benefit the IRC.

"As we watched the events unfold in Ukraine, Veronica and I immediately felt compelled to help, and our #VBGivesBack program is the most effective way for us to do that," said Veronica Miele Beard.

Veronica Swanson Beard also praised the IRC, adding the designers are "inspired by the meaningful assistance they are able to provide."

Ourania Dionysiou, vice president of international philanthropy and partnerships at IRC, said, "The IRC is honored to be featured as the newest nonprofit organization participating in the #VBGivesBack campaign. With millions of refugees and their families having already been displaced by the conflict in Ukraine, support for our teams in the region is needed more than ever." — LISA LOCKWOOD

## Emily's Super Gig

**Superga** has tapped Emily Ratajkowski as its latest global ambassador.

The model appears in the brand's spring campaign, which was shot in Los Angeles in January at Milk Studios by Zoey Grossman. The shoot was styled by New York-based stylist Emma Morrison. The partnership also features a spring 2022

collaboration with the model-author in which she created her own shoes with the label, tweaking the original designs of the 2750 Classic and Alpina.

"I've been wearing the brand for years. I wear sneakers all the time because I live in New York City and I have a giant dog that I have to walk and now a baby," Ratajkowski told WWD. "So sneakers have always been the way I make myself look fashionable while also practical."

One of her favorite go-to Superga sneakers include the 2750 Classic as well as any of the other "simple, white, straightforward ones."

Experiencing pregnancy and now being a new mom, the model's style actually has not evolved much seeing that living in New York City already calls for a more practical wardrobe.

"I think that I've always needed a little bit of comfort. One of the things that I love about New York is that you leave the house and you want to feel like you can go anywhere and do anything for the whole day," Ratajkowski said. "What I like about Superga is you can take them with you all day and you can dress them up or you can dress them down."

The partnership feels immediate and natural for Ratajkowski, who has been a fan of the Italian brand.

"I'm just happy to be affiliated with a brand I think is so natural to me. And I, of course, have a real soft spot in my heart for Italy," she said. "I go there almost every year. So it's really great for me to be working with an Italian brand."

— CONCHITA WIDJOJO

## Deciem Trims

**Deciem**, maker of The Ordinary, is closing several of its smaller brands.

The business will wind down HIF, Hylamide, Abnomaly and The Chemistry Brand. Products



Veronica Swanson Beard  
and Veronica Miele Beard.

Deciem is closing several of its brands, and will focus on The Ordinary and Niod.



will remain for sale until they sell out, the company said in an Instagram post where it unveiled the news.

The Ordinary, Deciem's most successful brand, will continue operating, as will Niod, the company's high-end skin care offering.

The company said the new,

more focused approach will allow it to do more of what customers love, "while allowing us the space to innovate with new brands in the future."

"As our little company has grown, we've discovered that focus is absolutely necessary in order to give brands the love they deserve," the company wrote.

Deciem is now majority owned by the Estée Lauder Cos. Lauder initially invested in 2017, and acquired a majority stake in 2021 that valued Deciem at \$2.2 billion. At that point, the company was doing about \$460 million in sales, primarily driven by The Ordinary.

Several other Lauder businesses, including Becca, Rodin Olio Lusso and the Aramis

and Designer fragrances division, have closed during the COVID-19 pandemic as the company has looked to funnel money towards areas of growth.

— ALLISON COLLINS

## Marc's Vintage Turn

**Marc Jacobs** is going into vintage with the help of one of Los Angeles' favorite vintage retailers.

The fashion brand has tapped Los Angeles-based vintage retailer Aralda Vintage and its founder Brynn Jones to curate a collection of vintage pieces to be

sold at the brand's new Heaven store located on Fairfax Avenue.

"After the Marc Jacobs/Heaven team approached me, we spoke about their demographic and what they generally like," Jones said. "They also gave me a price range [that] was \$80 to \$600. I love when I'm given certain boundaries to curate within. It makes the sourcing a fun challenge and the perimeters are also very helpful. After speaking with their team and lurking through their Instagram, I felt pretty tapped into who the Heaven customer is and what they like."

Jones described the curated vintage collection as "playful and a little offbeat," incorporating many pieces inspired by the 1990s and early Aughts. The collection includes vintage Marc Jacobs and Marc by Marc Jacobs pieces, as well as vintage pieces from brands like Prada, Anna Sui, Christian Lacroix, Comme des Garçons and Courrèges.

"I was so thrilled when they reached out because Marc Jacobs was the very first designer that I really fanned out to many, many moons ago and his designs were what really got me into designer fashion," she said. "So when I was approached to curate for his new store, it felt like a full circle moment for me."

Marc Jacobs' Los Angeles store opened last spring, offering his new Heaven polysexual, streetwear-inspired collection and reflecting Jacobs' own 1990s grunge aesthetic. The store offers apparel and lifestyle products.

Aralda Vintage has been a mainstay in the Los Angeles vintage scene since 2016, offering unique vintage pieces from virtually every major design house. Jones' store was recently brought into the spotlight in the second season of HBO's hit show "Euphoria" where costume designer Heidi Bivens enlisted Jones to curate a lavish vintage closet in a scene where Alexa Demie's character Maddy is babysitting for her wealthy boss. In the scene, Demie's character is seen trying on an array of vintage pieces from Thierry Mugler, Chanel, Dior and Halston, which all came from Jones' store.

Aralda Vintage's curated collection is available now at Marc Jacobs' store at 334 North Fairfax Avenue. — L.I. ■



Emily Ratajkowski  
for Superga.



Aralda Vintage's curated collection  
at Marc Jacobs' Los Angeles store.