

ACCESSORIES

South African Showcase Among Highlights at Première Classe

● The recently wrapped salon received rave reviews from buyers as it heads into its 30th anniversary.

BY DEVORAH LAUTER

PARIS — Buyers applauded the rich selection of new brands at the Première Classe accessories trade show, held in the Tuileries Gardens here earlier this month.

As its organizers prepare for the show's 30th anniversary edition in September, overall attendance at the event was up, as was the feedback from buyers pleased to peruse through 70 first-time exhibitors out of 420 brands featured at the show.

"This is the most beautiful accessories trade show. We need to come here to get inspired, and also place orders. It's our source of oxygen...and we found a lot of new brands," said Philippe, cofounder of French chain Trinity Mode et Maison, who asked to be quoted by his first name. He mentioned among new finds Lastelier's

reversible leather bucket bags, Dag gioielli's silk bracelets, and Atelier Boivin Parisien. For Trinity, 2018 was a positive year, largely thanks to the company's self-evaluation process, he said. "We don't hesitate to really question ourselves. Every season we put the counter back to zero. We don't repeat things over again. We ask ourselves what we will be doing going forward," said Philippe.

Eva Herren, owner of the Swiss concept store, Handlung, said Première Classe had improved from previous shows, with a higher-quality selection. "There are a lot of inspiring people here. It's not always like that. I have been to some fairs which were a bit boring, to be honest, where nothing surprised me, but this year there is a lot more," she said. Herren placed orders with French hat maker Béton Ciré and loved Spanish jewelry maker Helena Rohner's collection of modern, delicate pieces.

Another highlight was an area dedicated to South African designers, showcased by Khanyi Dhlomo, owner of Ndalo Group,



The atmosphere at Première Classe in Paris.

a technology, media and entertainment business, and co-license holder for "Project Runway South Africa." Dhlomo said the company is building a platform to promote South African designers who struggle to reach global audiences, and aims to "get the world to see African culture and design, not just as a trend that comes and goes, but as a key part of the world's design ecosystem."

Chosen for their unique South African narratives and sustainability, the collections represented "a completely untapped opportunity," said Dhlomo, adding: "There's a deep authenticity about Africa, and an incredible energy of possibility that doesn't exist in that level of potency anywhere else in the world. It's the last frontier."

Trend-wise, visitors noted more unisex options, and bold colors such as cobalt blue, reds and greens, plus a range of pastels. Shimmery textures on shoes as

well as strong velvets and corduroy also caught the eye.

"We're seeing a lot of layering, and trying to figure out how to incorporate the shirt with the jacket, the vest, the overcoat, and build through a multiple sale. We are also looking at all the hand-knit accessories, scarves on top of jewelry," said Stacey Pecor, founder of Olive & Bette's boutique chain in New York. She said business was up.

Other show changes included a more open, boutique-style layout in some of the tents, while a section located closer to the Place de la Concorde was opened to the public free of charge. It included a Jean-Louis pop-up store, plus a café run by the Refugee Food Festival, luxury vintage clothing for sale, and two humanitarian associations: the Fabrique Nomade, with accessories made by refugees, and the Fabrique des Arts, which recycles products.

Highlights from the show:



Kyomai clutches and handbags are made from vintage Japanese kimono sashes.

Kyomai

DESIGNERS: Thérèse and Nicolas

The French husband-and-wife duo created Kyomai in 2017, to make modern clutches and handbags from vintage obi kimono sashes. Fabric is sourced in Kyoto, while bags are assembled in France. Each clutch is numbered, since a single obi is not necessarily printed with a uniformly unique pattern, and can be used to make only five bags. RETAIL PRICES: 300 euros to 400 euros

Maxhosa Africa

DESIGNER: Laduma Ngxokolo
The designer's Xhosa culture feeds this ready-to-wear and accessory brand. Drawing from rich colors found in Xhosa beadwork, food and traditional

clothing, he designs geometric patterns on knitwear cut in mostly Western styles. One cape or blanket-like item refers more directly to traditional African clothing. RETAIL PRICES: 111 euros to 600 euros

Mantua

DESIGNER: Juandi Andrag
African life, color florals and femininity inspire Andrag's paintings, which she prints on African silk scarves made in South Africa. RETAIL PRICES: 64 euros to 110 euros

Atelier Boivin Parisien

DESIGNER: François-Régis Laporte
Laporte gathers inspiration from the 7,000 roles of fabric

that the Boivin tie-making workshop has collected over 100 years of operating in Paris. This season the Boivin atelier launched the rebirth of its own brand at the show, after years of producing handmade ties for other luxury houses. Variations of bow ties for men and women are made with elevated attention to detail, and unusual patterns, pushing the sartorial boundaries of the craft. Laporte

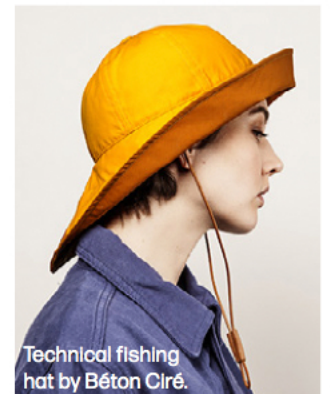


Mantua African silk scarf.

Looks by Maxhosa Africa.



A reversible leather bucket bag by Lastelier.



Technical fishing hat by Béton Ciré.

also designs for his own tie-making brand, Maison F Paris, created in 2011, with original shapes and ways of fastening. RETAIL PRICES: 60 euros to 115 euros

Lastelier

DESIGNER: Bérengère de Lassée
Three years ago Lassée launched her practical luxury hat and bag brand, with its reversible, leather bucket bags sporting two different looks in one. RETAIL PRICE: 480 euros



Handcrafted, fine bow ties by Atelier Boivin Parisien.

Béton Ciré

DESIGNER: Amélie Le Roux
Brittany coastal life inspires this French unisex brand which is expanding this season into a broader headwear label, including more technical products like a cotton fishing hat with a rim that comes to a point in the back, to control water runoff. RETAIL PRICES: 79 euros to 145 euros