

WWD

Chanel's New Era

The French fashion house on Thursday confirmed the 40-year-old Matthieu Blazy as its next creative director, aiming to appoint someone who can, like the legendary Karl Lagerfeld, head the brand's design studios for decades to come. "We hope to be together for 10, 15 years or more," Bruno Pavlovsky, president of fashion and Chanel SAS, told WWD. Blazy's move sparked a series of design changes at two other companies.

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PHOTOGRAPH BY ADAM KATZ SINDING

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Kevin Plank



BUSINESS

Kevin Plank to Capitalize On Under Armour's 'Underdog' Positioning

- The CEO said he believes the company's success hinges on cutting promotions, product selection and focusing on young team athletes.

BY JEAN E. PALMIERI

In Kevin Plank's mind, Under Armour is a \$5 billion start-up. And he's got a game plan mapped out to return the company

to growth and market dominance – a plan the chief executive officer and his management team laid out to WWD following an investor conference on Thursday in New York City.

But the turnaround is not going to happen overnight. Although the meeting was classified as “qualitative,” with no specific figures revealed, the team said it will take until the fall of 2025 for the results to show up on the bottom line.

The brand did, however, say that it expects to reach the projections it released earlier this year for the fourth quarter and full year.

Plank acknowledged that this is Under Armour's fourth restructuring attempt since the business began – but it's a markedly different business than it was 28 years ago. In addition to exceeding \$5 billion in annual sales, the company has more than 24,000 points of distribution

and some 2,000 stores around the world. But with that scope comes a lot of complexity, he admitted. And it's time to “let the baggage go.”

Plank said that during his absence from the CEO chair – at a time he characterized as “anti-founder” – he kept busy with other projects such as starting a whiskey business and working on development in his hometown of Baltimore. But with the company struggling, he felt it was time to return.

Since returning to the CEO post on April 1, Plank has surrounded himself with a team of seasoned veterans, some of whom have been at Under Armour for years and others who are new to the company. That includes newcomers Yassine Saidi, chief product officer, who has worked for everyone from Adidas and Puma to some of the big European fashion houses, to one-time Adidas and Reebok executive Eric Liedtke, executive vice president of brand strategy, who is overseeing the messaging for Under Armour.

Plank summed it up this way: “As a global sports house – capable of equipping athletes head-to-toe on and off the field, pitch or court – we are hard at work putting in place the people, structures and strategies essential to realizing Under Armour's full potential over the long term.”

In the four-hour investor presentation, the executives outlined the key points of Plank's plan, which he began to lay out after returning to the CEO position this spring. That includes dramatically reducing promotions and number of products offered and returning to an aggressive marketing stance. At the conference, the company said it will spend \$500 million in marketing next year to get its message out. And that message is about helping the underdog succeed, a role Under Armour itself also falls into.

As the smallest and youngest of the four major sports brands after Nike, Adidas and Puma, Under Armour is most definitely an underdog. But underdogs – such as the company's star ambassador Steph Curry of the Golden State Warriors who was considered too small to play professional basketball – can become superstars with the right game plan.

Unlike its competitors, “I believe this is the brand that shows up each and every day for...the kid that wasn't chosen first, that wasn't the fastest, or the strongest or the biggest,” Plank said. “This culture is paramount in this next chapter and we're going to overemphasize to our team what it means to be the underdog.”

Dramatic Changes

Since Plank started the business by creating a compression shirt for athletes, Under Armour and the sports landscape have undergone dramatic changes. At first, the company was an unparalleled success, posting years of record growth. But things started to go south in 2016 when the once high-flying brand began to stumble. At the time, the company was faltering both in terms of sales as well as with scandals ranging from strip-club visits by male executives to Securities and Exchange Commission investigations.

Plank stepped aside as CEO in 2020, turning the reins over to Patrik Frisk. His tenure lasted only two years and Frisk was succeeded by former Marriott International executive Stephanie Linnartz, who joined the company in the top spot in February 2023. After a year, she too was gone and Plank reassumed the CEO role.

Planked by his new team, Plank told analysts: “With a significantly strengthened product lineup coming in fall 2025, a clear underdog brand positioning and purposeful, disciplined marketplace management, I am confident that our actions are gaining traction. We are running a more agile and focused company, and ▶



Stephen Curry has been an Under Armour athlete for more than a decade.

our strategies are fostering renewed brand strength, which we believe will ultimately improve our ability to drive sustainable, profitable growth for our shareholders."

During his opening remarks to the analysts, Plank said Under Armour has the assets it needs to succeed, "We just have to leverage them." By focusing on product and storytelling, "we will win," he believes.

Immediately upon his return as CEO, 25 percent of stock keeping units were eliminated and fabric selection was cut in half. "We were bringing 325 fabrics to market every season," he said, but 80 percent of the business came from 30 of those fabrics.

A similar move was made in the Under Armour stores. At the global flagship, which opened on Dec. 7 at the company's new headquarters, the number of items was cut in half, from 1,200 to 600.

Footwear offerings are also being reduced. Although the company believes footwear offers the biggest opportunity for growth at Under Armour, the number of styles will drop from 38 to 19 under three names: the Hovr, Flow and Charge.

Coming in January will be the Echo, a model that Curry will launch at the NBA All-Star Game, followed by the Aura in July, a shoe that will be accompanied by apparel.

Another miss that was rectified already was the consolidation of the company's apparel, footwear and accessories teams within its 14 product categories. They had been operating as silos and not communicating, so the product looked

like it was produced by "three different companies," Saidi said.

Pricing is also being addressed. Among the priorities going forward are to elevate the prices on the more technical product within the pyramid of a good-better-best portfolio. "In the recent past, Under Armour has made a lot of good products, some better product[s], and nowhere near enough best-level product[s]," Plank said. "The great news is we don't have to stop selling 'good' in order to 'premium-ize' the brand. We just need to focus on our better and best, and we've taken steps to doing this."

Also paramount is to deemphasize promotions. Plank said that by focusing first on its own e-commerce pricing, Under Armour has increased the amount of full-price sales to 50 percent from 33 percent. "We became a company that was actually selling on price, and that's how the consumer was seeing us," he said. "We want to move to become a brand that sells on story."

Doubling Down

That's where the \$500 million comes in. Liedtke said next year, Under Armour will double down on its messaging to team athletes aged 16 to 24, its sweet spot. In the past, the company had been seen as a company targeted to men over the age of 34. "But we were born in team sports and we need to get back to that."

The messaging will still center around performance and innovation but will be "fun and lighthearted," he said. "We need

to aim for the heart, not the head."

In terms of categories, Under Armour believes it's well-positioned in apparel, and thanks to the addition of John Varvatos as chief design officer, the collections are being tweaked to be more trend-right.

Even so, Saidi also said to expect more collaborations next year. That includes a new one with the German company Mansory, which will come on the heels of the brand's partnership with Balenciaga earlier this year.

Innovation remains paramount to Under Armour, as senior vice president of innovation Kyle Blakely outlined. Working with Celanese, the company created Neolast, a performance stretch fabric that offers an alternative to spandex.

Kara Trent, president of the Americas, addressed some of the plans to strength Under Armour's largest market, which has been struggling of late, thanks in part to its reliance on promotions.

"With a \$200 billion total market opportunity across the American landscape, we see significant room for growth," she said, "particularly in the United States, where we currently hold around 4 percent market share." But it will require a total transformation to pivot to storytelling rather than price cuts.

"No one is mad at us," she said, "but they might be slightly confused or slightly indifferent to us, because we have not been clear on who we are, nor have we spoken to them in a meaningful or the right way. For us to be successful, we must

drive a clear and consistent narrative to athletes to build brand love. We will do this by repositioning the brand through the lens of the underdog, by focusing on the team sport athlete and by driving elevated experiences, both digitally and physically."

Turning to its overseas divisions, Jason Archer, managing director of the APAC region, where 1,400 of its 2,000 stores are located, said Under Armour has only a 2 percent market share of the area's \$93 billion sports market. But the product that performs best there is priced at the better and best level.

"Currently, China accounts for about half of the region's revenue, and we expect this number to continue increasing as we scale the business in the years ahead," he said. "In Japan, we're working with our long-standing licensee to leverage our core brand strengths of performance and team sports, while South Korea remains a critical market for UA as an influential cultural and trend hub. And finally, in Southeast Asia and Oceania, we'll continue to invest in crucial strategic wholesale partnerships and distributors to evolve our brand footprint."

In the EMEA, where the sports market is \$80 billion, sales have nearly doubled since 2020 as the division focused on premium positioning and team sports, according to Kevin Ross, managing director of the region.

The company has had the most success in the U.K. where it has "doubled down on strategic brand investments while maintaining discipline about where we will and won't do business," he said. ■

Matthieu Blazy on the runway at the Bottega Veneta, fall 2024 fashion show.



FASHION

Matthieu Blazy's First Chanel Show Set for October

- The star designer will still have to sit out the noncompete clause of his contract with his previous employer, Kering, before joining Chanel, most likely in April.

BY JOELLE DIDERICH AND MILES SOCHA

PARIS — At a time when luxury brands are cycling through designers at increasing speed, Chanel hopes to have found a long-term match in Matthieu Blazy.

The French house said on Thursday it has selected the former Bottega Veneta creative director as its new artistic director of fashion activities, putting an end to months of speculation around the position described as the most coveted job in fashion.

This follows a report on WWD.com on Nov. 14 that Blazy had emerged as a leading contender for the plum Paris post.

Blazy will be responsible for all haute couture, ready-to-wear and accessories collections and will report to Bruno Pavlovsky, president of fashion and president of Chanel SAS.

The 40-year-old designer is due to join the house in the first half of 2025, most likely in April, and will show his first

collection in October, Pavlovsky told WWD in an interview.

Chanel views it as a serious commitment. “We hope to be together for 10, 15 years or more. We’re just at the start of our story,” the executive said. “Together we’ll be able to write a new chapter for the brand.”

Blazy succeeds Virginie Viard, who exited Chanel last June after an uneven five-year tenure. He becomes only the fourth official creative director in the history of the 114-year-old brand, known for its tweed suits, quilted handbags and No.5 perfume.

A number of lesser-known designers, including Ramon Esparza, an acolyte of Cristóbal Balenciaga, and Philippe Guibourgé, best known for designing the Miss Dior line, created its collections between the death of founder Gabrielle “Coco” Chanel in 1971 and the arrival of Karl Lagerfeld in 1983.

“I am thrilled and honored to join the wonderful house of Chanel. I look forward to meeting all the teams and writing this new chapter together,” Blazy said in a statement provided to WWD.

With Blazy’s appointment, the Rue Cambon house is definitively turning the page on the era of Lagerfeld, who was its creative director for 36 years, with Viard as his right-hand woman. ▶

Bottega Veneta, spring 2025





The set of Chanel's spring 2021 ready-to-wear collection.

But the honeymoon will have to wait, as Blazy has to sit out the noncomplete clause of his contract with his previous employer, Kering, which confirmed his departure on Thursday and named Louise Trotter his successor.

In his three years leading Bottega Veneta, Blazy made the brand's show one of the hottest tickets in Milan, attracting the likes of Jacob Elordi, Julianne Moore, A\$AP Rocky, Michelle Yeoh and Kendall Jenner to his latest display.

He was appointed creative director of Bottega Veneta in November 2021, when he rose from ready-to-wear designer to succeed Daniel Lee at the design helm, marking his ascension to the top rungs of fashion after a career in the shadows with brands including Raf Simons, Maison Margiela and Celine.

The French Belgian designer has won consistent acclaim for collections hinged

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MATTHIEU BLAZY

on sophisticated, grown-up chic, and haute craftsmanship.

He's also been gaining renown as a fashion showman capable of pulse-pounding runway action and imaginative sets, which for spring 2025 consisted of leather beanbag chairs in 15 animal shapes.

"Matthieu Blazy is one of the most gifted designers of his generation," Alain Wertheimer, global executive chairman, and Leena Nair, global chief executive officer of Chanel, said in a joint statement.

"His vision and talent will reinforce the

energy of the brand and our position as a leader in luxury. Under Bruno Pavlovsky's leadership, we are confident that Matthieu Blazy will continue to shape what's next and write a new page in Chanel's creation," they added.

Pavlovsky revealed that Blazy edged out two other finalists to snag the post, following an exhaustive search that considered not just top-tier designers but "number twos, number threes and number fours" across the industry.

In the last six months, the rumor mill

has churned out potential candidates including Hedi Slimane, Simon Porte Jacquemus and Pieter Mulier. Pavlovsky declined to confirm any names but said the talent pool was thriving.

"Genuinely, all the people we met were great and I understand why luxury and fashion have such energy," he said.

"Very quickly, we narrowed it down to three people with whom we spoke, but Matthieu stood out immediately because he has a track record, a vision of Chanel and a modernity that seduced us," he continued.

"We chose the person whose values, talent and vision of women, of our clients, were the best fit for us. And a key point for me was that I sensed great admiration and respect for the heritage and the work done by Mademoiselle Chanel, by Karl and by Virginie," Pavlovsky said.

"That was important to me, because it wasn't about a kind of competition over image and size. It was about the depth of what the brand stands for, and how we could build on that to continue telling our story," he noted.

It marks the first time the privately owned company has recruited an external candidate for the top fashion creative post since Lagerfeld was appointed in 1983. Viard was seen as his natural successor after the legendary designer's death in 2019.

The legendary German designer had engineered one of the modern fashion industry's first and most successful brand rejuvenations and propelled the fabled French name from near obscurity to the summit of international luxury.

Viard gave the brand a more feminine bent and sought to appeal to a younger and more diverse demographic with her athletic-inspired clothes, multiplying Chanel's ready-to-wear business by 2.5 during her tenure. But online commenters skewered her last collections and the brand felt the time had come for a change.

Born in Paris in 1984, Blazy is a graduate of famed visual arts school La Cambre in Brussels, and he started his fashion career as men's designer for Raf Simons.

From 2016 to 2019, Blazy worked at Calvin Klein as part of the team Simons brought to New York, working on the men's and women's collections as design director. ▶



Virginie Viard on the runway during the Chanel cruise 2024 show.



Bruno Pavlovsky



Chanel's Métiers d'Art 2025 collection.

Before Calvin Klein, Blazy worked in the studio of Celine under then-creative director Phoebe Philo, becoming senior designer in 2014, and for four years at Maison Margiela.

Chanel took its time to plot its next move even though the creative transition coincided with a period of stalled demand in China, where it staged its recent Métiers d'Art show, and a drop in spending among aspirational customers in Western markets.

This reflects the strength the brand, a key point for Chanel's management team led by Nair.

"We defined the criteria that were essential for Chanel, and among these criteria, there is obviously the brand before the personality," Pavlovsky said.

"I won't name names, but some people have shown they can move from brand to brand and their style remains fairly identical, and the brand has to adapt," he said.

"Our brand is strong and has stood the test of time. It stands for values that we want to nurture. It's not about carrying someone else's vision. We believe that Matthieu's talent and power lies in the fact that he has the capacity to come into the brand and drive it forward," he added.

The stakes are high. Chanel again delivered record revenues in 2023, with sales up 16 percent at comparable rates to \$19.7 billion, although price increases alone accounted for a 9 percent progression.

In the last decade the company has more than doubled its revenues and headcount, and now ranks as the world's second-largest luxury brand behind Louis Vuitton, with 36,500 employees at the end of 2023.

Blazy will be expected to churn out 10 collections a year, including two haute couture collections, six ready-to-wear collections, including the cruise and Métiers d'Art shows, and two "tactical" lines, Coco Beach and Coco Neige.

His remit does not extend to the fragrance and cosmetics, or jewelry and watches divisions, which have different business models, said Pavlovsky, who emphasized that teamwork was key to Chanel's continued success.

"Chanel's fashion business has become huge. After all, we're 10 or 15 times the size of Bottega Veneta or some emerging brands," he said.

"You can't have one person doing everything. It's the product of a strong and experienced collective working in tandem with a person who sets the tone with a collection or a show," Pavlovsky insisted.

Revenues at Bottega Veneta totaled 1.6 billion euros in 2023 and the brand posted 4 percent organic growth in the first nine months of 2024, bucking the overall negative trend at Kering.

While Chanel dwarfs his previous employers in scale, Blazy has some key qualifications. He comes with experience

in haute couture, having designed Margiela's Artisanal line.

"It's something he finds very inspiring, and no doubt a big part of what makes Chanel so enticing," Pavlovsky said. "With haute couture, designers experience moments of pure joy."

Crucially, Blazy has a track record of delivering desirable handbags at Bottega Veneta, including his hit Kalimero, Andiamo and Sardine styles.

"Chanel is first and foremost about the product," Pavlovsky said. "Matthieu is passionate about it, and it shows. The way he did such an exceptional job of reenergizing the product at Bottega Veneta, over a very short period of time, demonstrates that this is truly his signature."

His appointment is the latest step in a long-term succession plan set in motion with Nair's arrival in 2021. The former Unilever executive assumed a title previously held by Wertheimer, who then became global executive chair of the company.

However, Wertheimer remains a key decision-maker and is said to have personally informed Viard of his decision to bring in a new designer.

"There is a generational handover underway, and that generational change has to reflect the times. It's part of a process that is essential to ensure the future strength of the brand," Pavlovsky said.

"Today, we are a large, powerful corporation with several business models and our organization needs to reflect the size and requirements of this company," he added. "Matthieu's arrival fits perfectly into this dynamic."

Like Lagerfeld before him, Blazy has signed a renewable contract for his services, the executive said. While he did not give a duration for the initial term, he said Blazy would have two years to find his bearings at Chanel, in keeping with his "authentic" approach.

"Matthieu has a deep vision of the brand that will allow us to go even further than with a more show-off approach that goes fast. I think that on the contrary, he's someone who has to move at his own pace," Pavlovsky said.

"We have a very good feeling about it, but we've given ourselves two years, which is the time it takes to get a feel for the brand. I'm super confident, but now we have to do the work," he added. ■

FASHION

Bottega Veneta Names Louise Trotter New Creative Director

● Trotter, who has been leading the rebirth of Carven, will succeed Matthieu Blazy.

BY LUISA ZARGANI

MILAN – Bottega Veneta has made its choice and the newly appointed creative director Louise Trotter is expected to bring a different aesthetic to the Italian luxury brand.

Bottega Veneta on Thursday said it had selected Louise Trotter to succeed Matthieu Blazy. This confirms a WWD report on Dec. 6. She will join Bottega Veneta at the end of January.

While Blazy, who left the brand to join Chanel as artistic director of its fashion activities, brought a new type of sizzling fireworks to the brand with his inventiveness with leather, Trotter's style so far has been even more understated as a designer than his – perhaps ideal for a brand that used to advertise its wares with the tag line of “When your own initials are enough.”

“I am pleased to welcome Louise as our new creative director. Her aesthetic seamlessly combines exquisite design with sublime craft and her commitment to cultural advocacy aligns beautifully with our brand vision,” said Leo Rongone, chief executive officer of Bottega Veneta, in a statement issued at the end of trading. “Through her sophisticated lens, Bottega Veneta will continue to celebrate its heritage while preserving modern relevance. I also want to express my profound appreciation for Matthieu, who has been an extraordinary partner in infusing our brand with desirability, emotional resonance and intellectual identity.”

Francesca Bellettini, Kering deputy CEO in charge of brand development, added that Trotter “brings a wealth of experience and a fresh perspective to Bottega Veneta's tradition of bold creativity and unparalleled excellence. She is the ideal creative talent to carry forward, alongside Leo Rongone and the Bottega Veneta team, the remarkable journey initiated with Matthieu Blazy, to whom I extend my heartfelt gratitude for his visionary creativity.”

Trotter joined Carven in February 2023 and her first collection for the brand bowed in September last year during Paris Fashion Week. Carven had been absent from the runways and without a marquee designer for several years. Trotter reignited the label with her quietly sensual designs and her focus on textures would gel with Bottega Veneta and her predecessor's work at the brand.

On Thursday, Carven announced the departure of Trotter on Jan. 24.

The designer said in the statement that she was “deeply honored” to join Bottega Veneta. “The house's storied legacy of artistry and innovation is truly inspiring, and I am excited to contribute to its future and celebrate its timeless vision.”

Before Carven, Trotter held the same role for four years at Lacoste. She studied fashion design at Newcastle University, and worked at contemporary British label Whistles before moving Stateside to design for Calvin Klein, and later Gap and Tommy Hilfiger.

Trotter returned to London for a stint at Jigsaw and then served as creative director of Joseph from 2009 to 2018, a period of product diversification and international expansion for the brand.



Louise Trotter

During her four-year tenure at Lacoste, she beefed up the womenswear offering and explored innovative methods of upcycling. Giovanna Brambilla, partner at

Milan-based executive search firm Value Search, said her impression of Trotter “is that she is an eclectic and versatile designer, almost chameleonic, moving

from “more casual” brands such as Gap, Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger, to Joseph, “with its linear style, for a sophisticated clientele looking for daywear pieces,” ▶



and then Lacoste, where “she reinvented the brand with her patchworks, a palette of bright colors and recycled materials,” and finally Carven, with “her chic, bon ton, elegant and minimal styles, luxury but at a balanced price.”

Brambilla remarked on the different size of Carven compared with Bottega Veneta, adding that her ready-to-wear experience could further boost the category at the Italian brand, whose heritage is in accessories. “Her work with American brands could lead her to probably play a more relevant role in merchandising.” She also highlighted the fact that Trotter is a woman at a time when there are few at the head of established luxury fashion brands.

Fashion theorist, professor and curator Maria Luisa Frisa said, “We must get used to continuous revolving doors of designers, similarly to what happens with soccer coaches, because the cycle is so fast and wearing that they need to find new stimuli.” Frisa also said that a less binding link between brand and designer “helps the former stand out in people’s mind, rather than the designer’s name. More and more, it’s the machine behind the brand that needs to be functioning, and the creative director is one element, working on the heritage which is increasingly important.” She also pointed out that “today, there are very few designers who have a vision to

build a whole imaginative world for the brand, behind every details.” She attributed this to the fact that designers now “often don’t work their way up” and don’t have a deep grasp of the full production cycle.

Blazy was appointed creative director of Bottega Veneta in November 2021, when he rose from ready-to-wear designer to succeed Daniel Lee at the design helm.

Born in Paris in 1984, Blazy is a graduate of famed visual arts school La Cambre in Brussels, and he started his fashion career as men’s designer for Raf Simons.

From 2016 to 2019, Blazy worked at Calvin Klein as part of the team Simons brought to New York, working on the men’s and women’s collections as design director.

Before Calvin Klein, Blazy worked in the studio of Celine under then-creative director Phoebe Philo, becoming senior designer in 2014, and for four years at Maison Margiela, ultimately responsible for its couture line, dubbed Artisanal.

The design change at Bottega Veneta is the latest shake-up at parent group Kering, which is going through the turnaround of Gucci under Stefano Cantino, who will take on the CEO role in January, working with creative director Sabato De Sarno, and C-suite changes, with Balenciaga CEO Cédric Charbit moving to the corner office of Saint Laurent in January, to be succeeded by Gianfranco Gianangeli.

Kering reported revenues fell 15 percent to 3.79 billion euros in the three months to Sept. 30, representing a decline of 16 percent in comparable terms, but Bottega Veneta, under the lead of Rongone, was a bright spot, with a 5 percent gain. The brand performed well in the U.S., Europe and the Middle East, powered by handbags, including the hugely popular Sardine style.

Bottega Veneta has been on an upward trajectory over the past few years, propelled by Blazy, whose sophisticated and highly crafted designs won consistent acclaim, and by Lee before him, who helped revive the heritage brand, with influential and youthful collections, especially the accessories – from the signature Pouch bag, which was introduced in his first collection in 2019, or the Cassette bag and the Lido sandals.

In November, the luxury brand unveiled a new Residence on Madison Avenue, which followed a first such project, Palazzo Bottega Veneta, inaugurated last June in the Italian lagoon city and housed in the 15th-century Gothic Palazzo Soranzo Van Axel.

Bottega Veneta was founded in Italy’s Veneto region in 1966 by Michele Taddei and Renzo Zengiaro in 1966. Shortly after Zengiaro left Bottega Veneta at the end of the ‘70s, Taddei handed over the company to his ex-wife Laura Braggion, who headed the company with her second husband Vittorio Molto.

Ohio-born Edward Buchanan joined Bottega Veneta after graduating from Parsons School of Design in 1995, and with creative director Laura Molto, he was tasked with developing the brand’s first ready-to-wear collection as design director. The first fashion show for the brand was staged in October 1998 at Palazzo Serbelloni. Buchanan left the company after six years to launch his own Leflesh brand with Manuela Morin, also a Bottega Veneta alumna, and Giles Deacon joined the creative team for one year.

The Molto exited Bottega Veneta shortly after then-Gucci Group’s acquisition and Patrizio di Marco was recruited from Céline, where he was president of U.S. operations, to join Bottega Veneta as chief operating officer in May 2001. The following month, he was promoted to CEO, while at the same time, Tomas Maier was

tapped as the brand’s creative director from Hermès, thereby setting up Bottega Veneta for its reinvention.

From the brand’s signature Intrecciato woven leather bags and leveraging the strength of its artisans, the history and cultural background of the region itself, Maier had set to create a lifestyle label.

Di Marco was tasked with repositioning Bottega Veneta in the luxury range, which was a tough call because the brand had strayed from its roots and diluted its brand DNA by embracing a flashier, less luxurious identity and had very little left of the old archives.

After structuring its global organization and distribution, growing revenues more than tenfold in six years, in 2009 di Marco left the company on a high note and was tapped to lead the Gucci brand, succeeding Mark Lee as CEO.

In January 2009, Marco Bizzarri, previously at Stella McCartney, was appointed president and CEO of Bottega Veneta, and although his arrival coincided with the global recession, he also succeeded in leading the brand through another growth phase.

He continued to build the brand on discreet luxury and craftsmanship, establishing new 108,000-square-foot headquarters in Milan and investing in the company’s human resources by providing its employees with a new headquarters in 2013 – the stately 18th-century Villa Schroeder-Da Porto, ensconced in a park about 16 miles from Vicenza, in the Veneto region of northern Italy, and internalizing its own school of artisans. He drove growth in Asia and further expanded the brand’s retail footprint, opening a flagship in Milan.

In 2014, Bizzarri went on to become CEO of Kering’s newly created Couture and Leather Goods division, directly supervising most of Kering’s luxury brands. Former Valentino and Ermenegildo Zegna Group executive Carlo Alberto Beretta was appointed CEO of Bottega Veneta in January 2015 and exited a year later, succeeded by former Hugo Boss CEO Claus-Dietrich Lahrs, and then by Rongone in 2019.

In 2018, after 17 years, Maier left Bottega Veneta, succeeded by Lee. ■

FASHION

Trotter’s Last Carven Collection Will Be Pre-fall 2025

- The brand confirmed it will show at Paris Fashion Week in March, but with a “focused” collection.

BY LILY TEMPLETON

PARIS – In confirming the exit of Louise Trotter, Carven on Thursday indicated her final collection for the house will be pre-fall in January.

“On January 24, Louise Trotter will close this chapter with us,” the fashion brand said on Instagram. “Every ending is a new beginning. Best wishes to all of our creative peers.”

The British designer joined Carven, which is owned by Shanghai and Paris-based fashion company ICCF Group, in February 2023.

At the time, Carven’s chief executive officer Shawna Tao described Trotter as the “perfect candidate to revive the house.”

“We intend to change everything – the stores, the logo, everything,” Trotter told WWD in a preview ahead of her debut show. Raring as she was to get going on this new chapter, “the point of view is that I want to build this quite carefully and

slowly,” she said.

Her first collection for the brand bowed in September last year during Paris Fashion Week, reigniting the label with her quietly sensual designs.

The spring 2025 collection, shown in September in the label’s studio above its historic boutique at the foot of the Avenue des Champs-Élysées in Paris, is her last runway for the brand.

Her final Carven collection is pre-fall 2025, set to be shown in January.

Trotter’s successor at Carven could not be immediately learned, as the brand seems set to make deeper changes.

Crediting Trotter for leading “the team that successfully brought Carven back to the fashion stage and [that] she achieved important milestones,” Tao said the brand was primed for “the next stage of growth.”

“In this phase, we start to create a new model to drive the development of the brand,” she continued. “This model will invoke the spirit of [Madame] Carven to truly build ‘an excellent French fashion house with a democratic spirit.’ Further details will be released in 2025,” the Carven CEO continued.

The brand said its fall 2025 fashion



Here and right: Carven, spring 2025

show would go ahead during March’s Paris Fashion Week, with “a concise and focused collection to leave room for deeper exploration of these ideas” centered on the codes it will take forward in following seasons.



EXCLUSIVE

Aritzia Triples Its Fifth Avenue Footprint



Aritzia's new flagship on Fifth Avenue.



Inside Aritzia's new Fifth Avenue flagship.

- The Canadian retailer continues to steadily but selectively choose sites for its U.S. expansion.

BY DAVID MOIN

Aritzia, the Vancouver-based fashion retailer, is making a bigger statement on Fifth Avenue.

On Monday, Aritzia opens a 33,600-square-foot flagship at 608 Fifth Avenue, just a stone's throw from Rockefeller Center and one block from the brand's original Fifth Avenue location, which opened in 2012 and is closing. The timing couldn't be better considering the Rock Center Christmas tree is up and tourists, domestic and international, have been flooding the area to see the many Midtown holiday attractions.

The new Fifth Avenue Aritzia is nearly three times the size of its predecessor, and only a handful of Fifth Avenue retailers have more space, including Saks Fifth Avenue, H&M, Nike, Tiffany, Bergdorf Goodman and Uniqlo.

Count the opening as another sign that the Canadian brand is determined to grow its footprint in New York City and elsewhere in the U.S. The impulse is understandable given Canada's population is much smaller, at just under 40 million, and the brand's desire to create richer shopping experiences.

"Our new Fifth Avenue flagship marks an exciting new chapter for Aritzia," said Jennifer Wong, chief executive officer of Aritzia. "This expanded space offers increased visibility in one of the world's most iconic shopping districts, drawing a global audience from the heart of Rockefeller Center. We are proud to deepen our commitment to New York City and further establish our presence in premier retail destinations across the USA."

Wong has spearheaded the U.S.

expansion that began in 2007, the launch of e-commerce in 2012, the initial public offering for Aritzia in 2016, and the relocation of a distribution center for handling greater capacity. She has been behind efforts to "reimagine," as she has said, the shopping experience.

At a time when many retailers are reporting top-line declines, Aritzia projects 2024 net revenue in the range of 2.52 billion Canadian dollars to 2.62 billion Canadian dollars, representing growth of 8 to 12 percent.

Brian Hill founded Aritzia 40 years ago and initially rolled out 1,500-square-foot traditional boutiques. But not long ago the retailer went bigger with units that occupied 30,000 to 40,000 square feet over a couple of levels and were rigged with multiple media screens, cafés and eating areas. Last month, Aritzia opened a SoHo flagship at 560 Broadway by Prince Street, replacing the former and smaller 13-year-old SoHo store at 524 Broadway.

The company is growing its U.S. footprint in a disciplined manner, selecting prime spots. Its plan has been to open eight to 10 boutiques each year from fiscal 2023 to fiscal 2027 and more specifically, 12 to 13 this year. Aritzia also aims to complete three to five store expansions from fiscal 2023 to fiscal 2027, including three to four this year. The vast majority of these are in the U.S.

In a WWD interview earlier this year, Wong said: "We're uniquely and strategically placed in what we call 'everyday luxury,' [focused on] high-quality design and construction at an attainable price point. We believe there's no one doing exactly what we're doing."

Natural light pours into Aritzia's new Fifth Avenue flagship helping to spotlight the brand's collection, which the company characterizes as "everyday luxury" though the prices are well below those of luxury brands.

Among the features at the flagship are

An evening dress from Aritzia.



A career outfit from Aritzia.



two A-OK Cafes, one of which has a view of the Rockefeller Center Christmas tree; expanded food and beverage concepts, a plant-filled atrium, two-story grand archways and brickwork add character to the site. There is also the debut of a new, gourmet soft-serve ice cream.

The new Fifth Avenue flagship features a curated mix of vintage European furniture, large millwork coffered ceilings, artwork and expansive marble surfaces enriched with wire-wheeled oak. There's also a cozy, elevated lounge area, and advisers on the premise to provide styling and tailoring advice. There are

currently four Aritzia boutiques located in Manhattan, in Hudson Yards on the far West Side, in the Flatiron neighborhood, as well as in SoHo and Midtown.

The specialty retailer designs and develops 11 in-house collections under such labels as Wilfred, Babaton, Golden, Tna, The Super Puff and Sunday Best. Aritzia also offers some third-party apparel and accessories, such as Levi's, Asics and Citizens of Humanity. The brand targets a wide range of women, from teenagers to those who are middle-aged. Pamela Anderson, who is in her mid-50s, appeared in an Aritzia campaign last year.

WWD

Polly Mellen styling Patti Hansen.



Model Anh Duong, actress Gina Gershon and editor Polly Mellen at the Dolce & Gabbana fall 2002 show in March 2002 in Milan.

OBITUARY

Intrepid Fashion Editor Polly Mellen, 100

● Direct and energetic, the former *Vogue* editor left her mark working with prized photographers like Richard Avedon, Irving Penn and Helmut Newton.

BY ROSEMARY FEITELBERG

The ever-direct fashion editor, a front-row fixture at fashion shows and one of the industry's most ebullient cheerleaders, Polly Mellen, has died at the age of 100.

Plans for a funeral or memorial service were not immediately known Thursday.

Speaking of Mellen's death, Condé Nast's chief content officer and global editorial director Anna Wintour said Thursday via email, "Polly was a mercurial grand dame with boundless energy and a deep love for her work and for the creative process. She was an adored figure at *Vogue* and a huge part of our history. Working with giants like Irving Penn, Richard Avedon and Helmut Newton, she was fearless on set: Nothing mattered more than the image, which might create beauty, or push boundaries, or do both at the same time."

A troubadour in the field of fashion, Mellen proved herself time and again in the trenches and upper echelons with her expressive statements. Fittingly, she had worked as a nurse's aide in a soldiers' hospital during World War II. After an early post at Lord & Taylor, Mellen went on to leave her mark at Harper's *Bazaar*, American *Vogue* and *Allure*. Her steely work ethic was of a first-to-arrive and last-to-leave ethos.

Mellen's résumé included a stint at Harper's *Bazaar* that started in 1951 under the esteemed Diana Vreeland, followed by 28 years at *Vogue* and then eight years as

Allure's creative director. In that last full-time post, Mellen also wrote the "Fashion Police" with another style powerhouse — the late Carrie Donovan. By her own account, Mellen did not have trouble finding her voice. So much so, that Avedon once complained that she was too noisy to work with. Needless to say, the creative pair heard each other out and created groundbreaking shoots for years.

Never one for nostalgia, Mellen was always in search of what's next. She told *WWD* in 1999, "What's hard is that you keep your eyes open and there can be no laziness. It's not a matter of who you are or what you are. It's not a matter of seniority — it's a matter of performance."

She also heeded hiring advice that the photographer Arthur Elgort once gave her — "drop something; if you pick it up quicker than they do, they're not for you." Mellen also heeded Carmel Snow's career advice of "Go see every designer everywhere. You never know where the next talent is coming from. Open your eyes, have a little humility, and let go of ego."

Her start at *Vogue* was also under Vreeland, but that was short-lived. After Vreeland was abruptly fired and replaced with one of her former assistants, Grace Mirabella, the office decor changed overnight from red walls and a leopard carpet to neutrals. "The next morning everything was beige, beige,

beige," Mellen told *WWD*. "I am not a beige person."

Her first shoot at *Vogue* was a five-week trip to Asia with Avedon (who described her as the most creative sittings editor that he had ever worked with). The assignment was said to be the most expensive fashion shoot ever. The final edit included shots of Verushka head-to-toe in white fur walking through the snowy mountains of Hokkaido. Another shot featured the model topless in the lotus position as a

Japanese fortune teller looks down at her erotically. "There is a word that comes with being a strong editor. That word is responsibility," Mellen said in 2002.

Part of her incentive to leave the then-secure world of magazine publishing was her interest in freelancing. However backward that might seem through today's lens, when many enterprising creatives take a catch-as-catch-can approach to freelance and side gigs, Mellen came of age when top-tier editors were fully dedicated to their employers, striving for firsts with photography, models, designer collections and information. Upon exiting *Allure* in 1999, Mellen told *WWD*, "I love change, and I believe in change. Change is growth and hope. What we've seen already is such an 'up.' Change has to happen; nothing stands still."

The Connecticut-born creative didn't just help steer fashion, but she also contributed to how readers viewed the world and society. She was part of the team that shot a cover with the Black model Peggy Dillard in 1977. "The world was changing. Priorities were shifting," Mellen once recalled of that time.

She shot a gap-toothed Lauren Hutton and later Patti Hansen before they became household names. Mellen pulled clothes from the magazine's big advertisers and pulled from newcomers like Halston and Calvin Klein. Nicolas Ghesquière, Alexander Wang, Michael Kors, Marc Jacobs and Ralph Lauren were a few other talents she praised. Mellen also ushered in photographers like Carter Smith, Tom Munro, Nathaniel Goldberg and Michael Thompson. Not about to name the most difficult model that she worked with, Mellen once intimated that Raquel Welch, Faye Dunaway and Barbra Streisand weren't exactly cupcakes. ▶



Polly Mellen at the Giorgio di Sant'Angelo fall 1976 fashion show.

Polly Mellen reading a copy of Women's Wear Daily at Donna Karan show in November 1995 in New York.



Kate Moss on the Calvin Klein runway with Mellen in the background.



Fran Lebowitz, Calvin Klein, Richard Avedon and Polly Mellen backstage during the CFDA fashion awards in 1994 in New York.



Mellen, Bill Cunningham (with camera) and guest at the Irving Penn Retrospective at The Museum of Modern Art on Sept. 13, 1984.

When the initial test shots for a 1981 shoot with Nastassja Kinski weren't great, Mellen went to her dressing room to ask if she had any favorite animals, which turned out to be snakes. After the model said she was game for a shoot with a snake, Mellen "ran down" to Avedon, and called an animal trainer to bring a snake to the set. Describing that shoot in 2012 during a "Fashion Icons" talk with Fern Mallis, Mellen said you could tell Kinski was "really fascinated and turned on by it. Holding this snake, I mean, you can't believe it. It is so very seductive. Dick asked her if she would lie down and be nude with the snake. The snake wound up her body very slowly. Nobody was telling it what to do. I could hardly believe what I was seeing. When the snake got to her ear, he kissed her and put out his tongue. Then the shoot was over and I was crying."

Avedon's assistant of 15 years, Gideon Lewin, recalled Thursday the privilege of working with Mellen in Avedon's studio and on location. "An amazing editor with a great eye, she was intense and totally focused on set, and she was a lot of fun off set."

Describing Mellen as a mentor to many, Lewin remembered delivering contact sheets to Mellen for her to proof during Paris Fashion Week decades ago at the Hotel Crillon. "She was in bed, very happy and with a bottle of Champagne nearby."

Innately able to recognize the essence of a collection and what works about it, Mellen always cut to the chase. When Mirabella started to lose her touch in the 1980s, when the economy was ailing and the pages were getting boring, Mellen sent a New York magazine editor – Wintour – to meet with Mirabella. In time, Wintour replaced

Mirabella and brought in Grace Coddington as creative director, bumping Mellen to special projects editor. "I'm not dumb. You begin to realize that you're a bit of an extra," Mellen once told WWD, adding that Wintour was "very polite" about the whole thing, but the experience really stung.

With her signature white bob and questioning eyes, Mellen was unmistakable with her crisp minimalist style and quick pace. Case in point – her look of custom Gucci leather pants and an eccentrically gathered nude top would pass the on-trend test today for most Gen-Zers. And Mellen donned that look in her 70s. By her own account, she never believed in buying clothes for one season and throwing them out the next. "I can't do that kind of shopping," she told WWD in 2002. "I like glamorous classics, not fancy clothes."

And she wasn't above a pair of well-cut Levi's. "You are never out of style in a pair of blue jeans. I don't care what anyone says," Mellen said in 2002.

Stan Herman said, "Fashion was food for her and her appetite was enormous, which is something that we don't see so much today. She was able to come out of the back rooms, because of her personality and the time. We were discovering stylists for the first time. They weren't part of anyone's repertoire at that time."

Herman said Mellen filled the air with

her enthusiasm, which is scarce today. "There's too much tempering of how people are supposed to react. She just acted spontaneously," he said. "But it was genuine. She wasn't a phony. You looked at her incredulously and then you joined her team, because it was the only team in the room."

Certitude was engrained in Mellen, who said in 2012, "I am not sure that I believe in doubt, because if you're learning and curious, something else takes over and doubt can be erased. Doubt is a negative feeling and I don't think I am a negative person. There is no need to feel negative. It is much better to feel rosy, to look forward. That's what I do."

Her zeal for fashion was even hands-on during runway shows – although that tactile approach was always done with impeccable manners that were no doubt gleaned during her schoolgirl years at the prestigious Miss Porter's School. Mellen once explained to WWD that she always asks first, before reaching out to feel the garments that runway models were wearing. A practice that sometimes elicited, "Chills!" from an approving Mellen. "I do it very quickly and I've never gotten a 'No.' I think it depends on how one does it. I do it politely."

Mellen groomed generations of other style setters including the fashion designer

Vera Wang, who at the age of 21 was Mellen's assistant at Vogue. When Wang turned up for a sitting in a white Yves Saint Laurent shirtdress, Mellen asked where she was going "dressed like that." The take-charge Mellen then advised Wang to go home and "put on your jeans, honey, because you're going to be cleaning the floors."

After working as her assistant for a year, Wang shared an office with Mellen for nearly 14 years at Vogue. "Her passion and eye for fashion were legendary, but so was her work ethic. But most of all [there was] her love for Vogue," said Wang.

Wang described Mellen as her "mentor, taskmaster and eventual colleague." Her fondest and worst memory of working with Mellen was at a shoot with the photographer Deborah Turbeville in front of

the Metropolitan Museum of Art's north fountains. After Wang forgot a hat in the fashion closet, Mellen announced that she had ruined the sitting and forced her out of the Condé Nast van to go fetch the hat from the office. When it started to pour torrentially, Wang had no money or umbrella and jumped into another Condé Nast van nearby. Wang recalled Thursday, "Luckily, my friend, photographer Patrick Demarchelier, loaned me two dollars for cab fare. There is not one time I climb the steps to The Met Costume Gala that I do not remember that moment. Polly taught me hard, but necessary lessons that are too many to mention. But failure was not an option and organization, effort, work ethic and perfectionism were paramount!"

Mellen once explained how her priorities shifted after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11. "When Ricky Vader's [a fashion editor] husband died [in the World Trade Center attacks], she told me, 'Go home to Henry [Wigglesworth Mellen.]' And I decided to do just that. I spoke to her, and I was home the next day."

After the aforementioned "Fashion Icons" talk with Fern Mallis in 2012, Mellen said, "I was spoiled but I knew it, I know it and I loved it. I ran to work and I have no regrets."

Predeceased by her husband, the names of Mellen's survivors were not immediately known Thursday. ■

BUSINESS

The Independents Acquires PR and Communications Agency Lucien Pagès



Lucien Pagès



Isabelle Chouvet

● The deal marks the group's fifth acquisition this year as it creates a global powerhouse in luxury, fashion and lifestyle communications.

BY JOELLE DIDERICH

PARIS — Marking its fifth acquisition this year, global marketing and communications group The Independents said Friday it has added Lucien Pagès to its collective of leading agencies.

The umbrella entity, founded in 2017 through the merger of Asia-based events organizer K2 and public relations agency Karla Otto, has acquired Lucien Pagès Communication, a PR and communications agency with offices in Paris and New York, for an undisclosed sum.

It turns out Pagès is a friend of The Independents cofounders Isabelle and Olivier Chouvet, who have a holiday home not far from his native village in the secluded Cévennes mountains in the south of France. They first met in 2016.

"We have a tradition of going to visit each other's village every summer," he told WWD in a joint interview with Isabelle Chouvet, chief executive officer of The Independents.

She has childhood memories of visiting the restaurant run by Pagès' late father. "I had never been back since going there with my parents. It was very emotional for me to return there and meet Lucien and his mother," she said.

When Pagès saw his friend, fashion show producer Alexandre de Betak, sell his company to The Independents in 2021, the idea of joining forces took root.

After 18 years of building his agency

without external financing, and having weathered the coronavirus pandemic solo, he relishes becoming part of a wider network while remaining at the helm of his company.

"In a world that is changing and permanently evolving, I felt the need to lean on strong partners. By freeing me from certain pressures, I feel it will allow me to do my job even better," said the PR, whose clients range from luxury brands like Saint Laurent, Loewe and Schiaparelli to emerging designers such as Ludovic de Saint Sernin.

Flush from a \$400 million investment last year led by private equity firm TowerBrook Capital Partners and entertainment giant Banijay Group, The Independents has been on an acquisition spree, betting on scale and geographical reach to counter a luxury downturn.

The group expects to log revenues of more than \$750 million in 2024, up from \$600 million in 2023, Chouvet said.

Earlier this year, it swallowed brand consultancy and entertainment company Sunshine, in addition to Kennedy, the strategic consultancy behind initiatives such as traveling social club Prada Mode.

In September, it bought creative production agency Kitten Production and Dubai-based luxury tech firm Bureau Béatrice. With Pagès, it now groups 17 partner firms employing 1,200 people in 16 cities, Chouvet said.

"It's an extraordinary network for our clients who all gravitate around fashion, luxury, lifestyle, art and culture. These are experts who speak the same language and come from different backgrounds," she said, describing the collective as "an orchestra of specialists."

"It's an extraordinary network for our clients who all gravitate around fashion, luxury, lifestyle, art and culture. These are experts who speak the same language."

ISABELLE CHOUVET, THE INDEPENDENTS

They will be joined by the Pagès team, which includes more than 50 people in Paris and 10 in New York, where he opened an office in 2019.

"He will fit in very naturally within the other agencies. We share a lot of the same values, and I think that for his clients, there will be a lot of potential synergies," Chouvet said.

She said the serial mergers happened naturally, likening it to putting together the pieces of a puzzle.

"Between Japan, China and South Korea, we had set up our agencies from scratch. We saw that our clients loved the fact that we could meet their needs in three completely different countries, but with a real local setup, and these clients have become increasingly global," she recalled.

"They needed support in Europe, the United States, the Middle East, and we couldn't open an agency from scratch each time," Chouvet said. "We had to be up to speed to respond to that, so being alone locally no longer makes sense today."

She described the group as an ecosystem for entrepreneurs who share best practices, but each maintains its own culture.

"What we like about Lucien, like all the other partners in the group, is precisely this entrepreneurial spirit and we want

him to keep that. That's why it's called The Independents. Everyone keeps their way of working, their DNA, their values, their way of testing things," she explained.

Pagès credited them with shaking up the system.

"I felt like service providers were not valued in the same way as other fashion and luxury professions," he said. "By creating this group, they showed that they could be a real force: a financial force, a strike force."

The high-profile PR, who cultivates a personal following through his Instagram account, which has 111,000 followers, said he fielded six acquisition offers last year. "That had never happened before, and I linked it to the fact that everyone saw The Independents growing in scale," he said.

The group's expansion comes at a time when luxury brands are morphing into entertainment providers, with the Pinault family's holding company Artémis buying a majority stake in powerhouse talent firm Creative Artists Agency and LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton launching a new entertainment division named 22 Montaigne.

"Things are evolving and in light of that, we could potentially continue to make other acquisitions. We did five this year and we have more planned in the coming months," Chouvet said.

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Benedetta Barzini wearing a look from Lessico Familiare's new collection.



A look from Lessico Familiare's new collection.

FASHION

Dover Street Market to Spotlight Lessico Familiare

- The Italian indie brand will present its new collection at Dover Street Market in Paris, marking its first foray into physical retail.

BY SANDRA SALIBIAN

MILAN – Italian indie brand Lessico Familiare is at a turning point.

On Saturday, the sustainable label known for its quirky one-off pieces will present its new collection at Dover Street Market in Paris via an event and installation, which will remain on site for a week. The range will then be available at the store, therefore marking the brand's first real foray into physical retail.

"The collaboration is the result of a chat with Carla Sozzani and Adrian Joffe during a visit to our studio 'Casalessico.' Talking about the project and browsing through the booklets of each collection, the idea of doing something together in Paris popped up," said Riccardo Scaburri, who founded the brand with Alberto Petillo and Alice Curti.

"Linking up with a partner like Dover Street Market represents a sort of watershed for us," Scaburri continued. "If until now we only existed in our studio and some magazines thanks to the support of press and friends. [From tomorrow] we'll be present in retail – but not just any retail, the type that most reflects our approach to clothing, [a mix] of commerce and storytelling at the same time."

Lessico Familiare's narrative for the event promises to be unexpected. The brand is looking to bring a flavor of its rustic roots by staging an event resembling a country fair rather than a glamorous fashion gathering.

"We chose to stage this presentation in December because, in addition to being out of any fashion season, it is a month of bittersweet folklore: traditions,

rom-comedies, dinners. Three key elements in our melting pot of references," Scaburri said.

In particular, the tie-up sparked the founders' desire to look back at their starting point and childhood. Dubbed "La Bruma e I Fossi," the new collection aims to portray memories of growing up in the Po Valley, the stretch of land roughly going from Turin to Venice and crossed by the Po river.

"We thought about the places where we grew up, our first sources of inspiration, made up of a sense of rigor and conviviality typical of the lowlands," Scaburri said. "It's a tribute that aims to offer a different narrative from the usual Italian one. It is as if, between the fog and the centrality of Milan, that land had remained a little low-profile and we want to celebrate it."

In doing so, founders were inspired by "The Tree of Wooden Clogs," a 1978 Italian film directed by Ermanno Olmi that won

the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival that year. The movie depicts the life of Lombardy peasant families working on farms for the same landlord during the late 19th century, casting actual farmers and locals instead of professional actors.

Lessico Familiare's quirky and nostalgic nature was mostly translated via cocooning and deconstructed shapes in a nod to farmers' day of rest. Coats, shirts and nightgowns were also assembled from deadstock fabrics and textile scraps as per the brand's practice, making each piece unique.

The outcome was less froufrou compared to previous efforts that were rich in bows, ruffles, flounces and patchworks, as the more streamlined hybrids better expressed the rigor of the theme. Still, accessories added a whimsical touch, including precious bonnets, crowns and headpieces crafted by artist Patrizia Benedetta Fratus, daughter of

the protagonist of the movie Maria Teresa Brescianini.

The brand will reimagine the basement of Dover Street Market to evoke the same rustic feel. Produced by Venice-based gallery and creative studio Mare Karina, the installation will include the works of artists from the Po Valley, from contemporary names such as Stefano De Paolis and Jacopo Velentini to older masters, like the late Cremonese landscape artist Enrico Erba.

Victoria Genzini, who joined Lessico Familiare's founding trio as image director and curated the installation, said artworks were picked to "pay tribute to a bucolic realism in which we believe a lot."

The brick-and-mortar debut won't change the label's approach to business. The founders have always considered this a domestic project rather than a proper fashion brand, as it follows no season but embraces experimental initiatives instead. As a consequence, its pieces have so far been mainly available on its e-commerce, given its artisanal, handmade production.

Scaburri, Petillo and Curti met while attending the NABA fashion, art and design school. After taking different paths, in 2020 they decided to launch Lessico Familiare, looking at what their domestic environment could offer. Hence curtains, mats and discarded clothes were upcycled to turn a "familiar lexicon," which is what the brand's name means in English, into new artisanal pieces.

That year, the founders did a shoot with legendary model and journalist Benedetta Barzini, who remains a friend of the brand and features also in the images promoting the new collection.

"After Paris, we will be back in Milan, for the first time during the women's fashion week in February," said Scaburri, who didn't provide any details on the next line, save for teasing that alphabet will play a central role.



A look from Lessico Familiare's new collection.



A sketch of Lessico Familiare's installation at Dover Street Market in Paris.

HOME DESIGN

Older Studio Founders to Unveil Memory Curtains

- Fashion veterans Letizia Caramia and Morten Thuesen will showcase their large-scale screen prints in Milan, alongside a workshop incorporating archive rugs by Cc-Tapis on Thursday.

BY SOFIA CELESTE

MILAN – In a cavernous tunnel of a defunct 1930s railway depot, Older Studio cofounder Morten Thuesen gazed at his upside-down selfie blown up on yellow gel-coated cotton.

"This is something entirely our own," he told WWD, pointing to another shot of his partner in life and work Letizia Caramia dressed in a snowsuit, flashing a thumbs-up sign.

"Memory Curtains," their inaugural show under their own names, is the fruit of their inner curiosity. "It's very much our passion project and a way for us to experiment," said Caramia, who is from Pietrasanta, Tuscany. "It's part of the fil rouge that joins everything we do together," Thuesen said.

The exhibition is the result of their constant exploration of photography, painting and architecture. Each piece originated from a photograph, was digitized, transferred onto fabric and stretched over large-scale iron frames. The motifs and landscapes were drawn from analogue



Memory Curtain Images screen printed on Cc-Tapis rugs.

photographs taken by Thuesen over the past decade. Corniced in monolithic wooden crates, which are traditionally used for transporting artworks, the duo underscore their flair for reused materials and creating architected spaces.

The two met at Alexander McQueen and in 2013 went on to found Older Studio, a business-to-business firm that makes sustainable, sartorial uniforms that have garnered a cult-like following. After designing staff outfits for Copenhagen culinary shrine Noma about 10 years ago,



Morten Thuesen and Letizia Caramia

things snowballed from there, explained Thuesen, who is also from Denmark.

Paris design fair Matter and Shape, 10 Corso Como and upscale lighting brand Flos, among others, followed. The latter tapped them for the costume design of a dramatic, interpretative performance during Milan Design Week 2023. Outside of their core business of making quirky workwear, they also design objects – furniture, cutlery, sculpture and even lighting, some of which was showcased by Milan's Nilufar gallery in 2022 and, most recently, was displayed at the Shanghai Italian Pavilion Expo and at the Alcova venue for Milan Design Week 2024 and more.

"Memory Curtains" will unfold at Dropcity, the architecture and design hub

in Milan first envisaged by Andrea Aputo in 2018. Dropcity is currently in the process of turning the row of tunnels running along Via Sammartini into a venue dedicated to propelling and supporting boundary-pushing ideas and creators. Fashion brands like Marni and Elisabetta Franchi have already hosted events in the space.

Running parallel to the exhibition is a public screen-printing workshop, part of Dropcity's program, led by acclaimed screen printer Andrea Baldelli. Throughout the exhibition, Baldelli will screen print a series of motifs by Thuesen and Caramia onto archive rugs and blankets supplied by luxury rug-maker Cc-Tapis. "Memory Curtains" will be on display on Via Sammartini 63 until Jan. 26.

HOME DESIGN

Salon Art And Design Expands to Dallas, Eyes New Cities

- Nicky Dessources, the event's newly appointed executive director, said organizers are keeping a pulse on other destinations.

BY SOFIA CELESTE

MILAN – Driven by the surging appetite for collectible design and art, New York City's Salon Art + Design has become the latest design fair to expand its reach. The collectible event produced by Sanford L. Smith + Associates said it will cut the ribbon on a new edition in Dallas from March 26 to 30.

The event will be held at The Block House in Dallas' East Quarter, spearheaded by Salon Art + Design's new executive director Nicky Dessources, who told WWD that a diverse range of works will be showcased, featuring contributions from local and international dealers.

"There is something about the aesthetic and the collectors in Dallas... it's very intimate and welcoming," she said, adding that the city's population has increased since 2010 to more than 1.3 million residents. Other cities could be on the

Salon Art + Design



Nicky Dessources

horizon for the fair.

"I would love to expand in different cities and am keeping an eye out to explore if that's really something we want to do," she said.

The 13th edition of Salon Art + Design was held at New York's Park Avenue Armory Nov. 7 to 11 and was the most successful yet, in terms of revenues and number of visitors, which rose 20 percent year-on-year, she added. The 13th edition welcomed a global roster of galleries such as Paris' Galerie Anne Jacquemin Sablon and Ukrainian modern and contemporary furniture, lighting and decor gallery Victoria Yakusha Gallery, alongside returning participants like Bernard Goldberg Fine Arts and Milan's Nilufar.

Last November, organizers introduced its inaugural Design and Art Advisory Council, composed of leading interior designers and art advisers such as Andre Mellone, Allan Schwartzman, Kim Heirston, Julie Hillman, John and Christine Gachot, Sara Story and others. Dessources said they are currently in the process of forming the same advisory council for Dallas.

"I want to support the local community and get the city's interior designers,

collectors and nonprofit organizations involved," she added, highlighting the city's investment in the arts, including the expansion of the Dallas Arts District, one of the largest urban arts districts in the country. In the past five years alone more than 50 new galleries have opened, showcasing a dynamic range of local and international talent. As the U.S. art market continues to expand, "Dallas is poised to become a key destination for collectors and enthusiasts alike," Salon Art + Design organizers said in a statement.

Salon Art + Design prides itself on presenting the world's finest vintage, modern and contemporary pieces alongside blue-chip 20th-century artworks. Featuring leading art and design galleries from around the globe, as well as cutting-edge makers, the fair also captures the trends across both art and design.

Since its inception in 2012, Salon Art + Design has risen to the fore as a premier destination where collectors and designers can discover rare and high-value collectible pieces showcased by well-known galleries. Compared to contemporary fairs like Design Miami, Salon features works from

various time periods.

Fairs around the world are also expanding. Design Miami launched the inaugural Los Angeles edition in May, another Basel fair in June, and its second edition in Paris in October. Brussels' curated design fair Collectible opened its doors in New York City for the first time in September.

Salone del Mobile.Milano debuted a Shanghai edition of its fair in 2016 at the Shanghai Exhibition Center in what unfolded as an exhibition designed to introduce Chinese design curious to the Italian way of living.

The last edition, which took place before the COVID-19 pandemic, was envisaged as a showcase for Made in Italy products and the Italian way of living in Shanghai. It remains to be seen whether organizers will see the fair return to China.

According to the most recent Henley & Partners' "Wealthiest Cities 2024" report, Dallas ranked 22nd for the best worldwide cities for millionaires with 68,600 millionaires, 125 centi-millionaires, and 15 billionaires. It ranked number six on the list of top cities for millionaires in the U.S.

FASHION

BPCM Founders Describe How to Survive 25 Years in Fashion PR



Vanessa von Bismarck and Carrie Phillips

● Torrential rains, an unauthorized database download and an indisposed A-list celebrity – the fashion publicists have seen a lot in their careers.

BY ROSEMARY FEITELBERG

After 25 years in business, Vanessa von Bismarck and Carrie Phillips have had their share of successes, laughs and struggles.

To celebrate their company BPCM's silver anniversary, they threw a party Wednesday night at SOB's, the Varick Street bar that was a popular haunt in the 1990s, and like them has stood the test of time. The duo connected in 1999, after von Bismarck gave up a commodities trading

job in Europe to try to get into public relations in the U.S. Remembering first joining Nike Communications as an intern, von Bismarck said Phillips, who was her boss, asked another employee who von Bismarck was. After Phillips declared, "She's much too old to be an intern." Von Bismarck recalled with a laugh how she replied, "I can hear you."

After three months of working together at Nike Communications, von Bismarck suggested they partner in their own agency – using a cubicle in a friend's office, which also had a fax machine. She informed Phillips that her father would invest \$10,000 – most of which would be placed in the bank, "because we're going to buy Bacon's Media Directory," [a book with journalists' information.] With only one artist client committed for a Lot 61 event, Phillips said,

"That's not a business plan." But the pair persevered, walking up and down Broadway "to tell everybody they were the new hot agency," von Bismarck said.

Opening Shanghai Tang (a deal that was secured through a friend of a friend that von Bismarck's parents knew) made people take notice. Even more eyes were on the company, after Vogue's Anna Wintour turned up for a fashion show for another client, the German brand Strenesse. After von Bismarck's good friend Nadine Johnson sent Stella McCartney their way, BPCM was off to the races.

Now with 100 employees and offices in New York, London and Los Angeles, BPCM's client base includes Hermès beauty and watches, Tata Harper, Glossier, Tag Heuer, VW, Amazon Fashion, Alexandre Vauthier, Officine Générale, Ritz Carlton, the St. Regis, Aman New York and Dom Perignon, among others.

As for memorable moments, Coty Inc.'s launch for Lady Gaga's "Fame" fragrance at the Guggenheim Museum was pretty, indelible. Encapsulated in a glass dome throughout the party, the Grammy winner came out the structure for 15 minutes – of fame, get it. Phillips recalled chatting with a guest, who stopped mid-sentence to ask if Lady Gaga was peeing. "I said, 'Well, there's no toilet there.' But yes she was peeing in a Champagne bucket."

Whether that was part of the installation was a matter of debate. Phillips said, "She knew she was going to do it, I feel. We just didn't know she was going to do it."

Another hard-to-forget moment was a red carpet occasion for IWC in Los Angeles, where torrential rains caused the red carpet outside of the venue to float away. The pair have weathered it all

though successfully. Von Bismarck, who has two sons, and Phillips, who has four children, agreed that as soon as an event ends, they forget all about it. "It's like pregnancy amnesia," Phillips explained.

Almost going under twice – once 10 years ago and another time 15 years ago – taught them the importance of impressing upon young entrepreneurs the need to stay on top of cash-flow issues. The worst things like COVID-19, unexpected layoffs and clients' comings and goings wind up being the best things because you end up with knowledge to avoid such challenges in the future, Phillips said. The company is seeing 20 percent annual gains on total billings, according to von Bismarck.

Asked about the early challenges, von Bismarck recalled a placement for their first client, a pashmina company. "We convinced a newspaper to print a special offer for these pashminas on the front page with a phone number," von Bismarck said. "The phone number was wrong, so we got fired from that one."

Another unexpected miss stemmed from allowing an employee to work remotely – long before that was routine – to care for an ailing parent. When it was time to return, the employee signed a long letter from Argentina with "Eat, pray, love. Allah," and her name," von Bismarck said. "Then she downloaded our whole data base from a coffee shop in Argentina."

As always, BPCM just carries on, despite the seismic shifts in the media landscape, COVID-19's impact on employees and clients' needs. "Clients want so much more today. They want strategy and so much more," von Bismarck said.

Asked about their best moments, the founders said the fact that 90 percent of Wednesday's attendees were former employees, including a few who traveled from California and Vermont. Phillips said, "There is a BPCM alumni hashtag, and people are in each other's weddings. They still like to hang out and they like to hang out with us."

FASHION

Heaven by Marc Jacobs Exhibition Opens in L.A.

● The show – with works by Sofia Coppola, Damien Hirst and more – is at Control Gallery, running through Jan. 18.

BY RYMA CHIKHOUNE

"Just Like Heaven" is an art exhibition that's a love letter to Marc Jacobs.

"The show functions as a signal flare of sorts," Sky Gellatly, cofounder of Control Gallery in Los Angeles and creative agency Incnlst, said of Jacobs. "He's really deserving of, not only his flowers in the space, but at some point, maybe a really pronounced, super comprehensive, institutional look at his work in and around collaborations with artists."

Indeed, Jacobs has been a significant cultural figure in bridging the realms of fashion and art throughout his career, both at his own label where a full roster of collaborators have helped him celebrate his 40th anniversary this year, and during his time at Louis Vuitton when his collaborations with Takashi Murakami, Richard Prince and Stephen Sprouse ushered in a new kind of luxury product.

That impulse has also translated to Heaven by Marc Jacobs and with its creative director Ava Nirui, who continues

to celebrate the arts by partnering with artists across industries. (Heaven by Marc Jacobs' most recent collaboration tapped Turkish British designer Dilara Fındıkoğlu for a capsule collection incorporating elements of grunge, romanticism and Y2K, modeled by Gigi Hadid.)

Gellatly and his team, working with Heaven by Marc Jacobs, tapped a group of creatives – including Sofia Coppola, Petra Collins, Futura 2000, Damien Hirst – to contribute works for a gallery show that celebrates the collaborative spirit of Jacobs. Some offered new works inspired by Jacobs, while others pulled from archives, including Hirst who showcases a silkscreen print with glaze on paper titled "Mickey," at \$35,000 – the highest price tag listed in the exhibition.

"Maybe this exhibition can function as a very small prototype of something that could maybe happen down the road, much bigger for him," Gellatly went on, of Jacobs. The artists, established names including Richard Kern and Marilyn Minter, alongside emerging talents Eri Wakiyama, Benjamin Reichwald, Chris Cadaver and Keegan Dakkar, were given carte blanche.

"The ethos of the gallery in L.A. is empowering artists to express themselves how they would like," Gellatly said. "So,

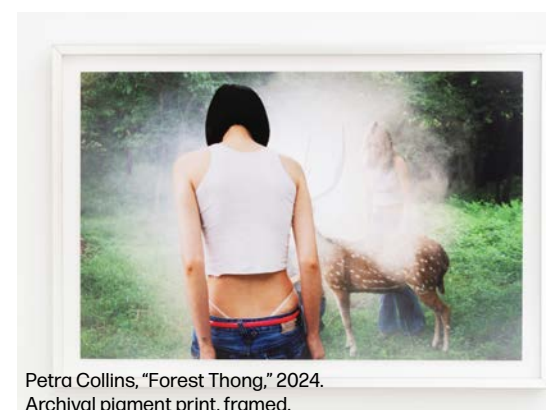


A look at "Just Like Heaven."

we effectively invited the artists that we did to participate, gave some guidance around what we'd like them to exhibit, but we largely left it up to them."

Other participants include Come Tees, Julian Consuegra, Manon Macasaet, Sara Rabin, Sara Yukiko, Sean Kennedy and Alake Shilling – whose work "Big Bossy Bear" (\$20,000), an object made of fired clay, sand, glitter, acrylic paint, crystals and other materials – is front and center.

"Alake's work created a sort of centralizing harmony in this space," said Gellatly of the piece. "At the end of the day, with the theme of the show being about celebration and shared respect and creativity, that anchoring visual in the center of the main space just felt grounded and very positive."



Petra Collins, "Forest Thong," 2024. Archival pigment print, framed.

Located at Control Gallery, at 434 North La Brea Avenue, "Just Like Heaven" is open through Jan. 18. The gallery, opened in 2022, was cofounded by Roger Gastman.

Speaking of Fashion...

WWD VOICES

A PODCAST SERIES

Episode 44: Trailblazers of Re-Commerce

In this episode, actress and author **Alicia Silverstone** and eBay's **Renee Morin** join WWD Voices host **Arthur Zaczekiewicz** to discuss re-commerce and how consumers can live more sustainably by **reselling pre-loved products**.

Retail

HOME TO VITAL NEWS AND INSIGHTS
ON THE STATE OF GLOBAL RETAIL, FROM TODAY'S MOST
INFLUENTIAL INDUSTRY STAKEHOLDERS

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FASHION

Rhode Fashion Label Shutting Down

- The contemporary brand was built on the foundation of fun, escapist prints, and available in 170 retailers worldwide.

BY BOOTH MOORE

Rhode, the Los Angeles-based contemporary brand built on the foundation of fun, escapist prints, and available in 170 retailers worldwide, is shutting down.

The news follows a high-profile homewares collaboration with West Elm that launched this summer, and the settlement in July of a 2022 lawsuit against Hailey Bieber and her beauty brand Rhode alleging trademark infringement.

The fashion brand's founders Purna Khatau and Phoebe Vickers made an announcement Thursday on Instagram, stating, "After 10 incredible years, we have

some news to share: Rhode will be closing its doors in the coming weeks. This wasn't an easy decision for us, but ultimately, new and exciting dreams are calling us forward."

Rhode was launched in 2014 by Khatau and Vickers who met as freshman roommates at Hamilton College and discovered they had the same taste during their very first shopping trip to stock their dorm room.

After their time at school, Khatau entered the fashion world as a buyer for Harvey Nichols in London, while Vickers went into advertising in New York. They reconnected in 2013 and created a resortwear collection, making clothing in India, where Khatau grew up.

Under a new company president, Marla Toplitzky, Rhode had been ramping up its direct-to-consumer distribution, and the digital business grew 90 percent in 2023,

the founders told WWD in June.

Dresses drove the most sales, and in 2023, the brand launched a successful new swim category, and debuted a collaboration with Target.

The closing comes at a particularly tough time for smaller brands with the upheaval of the wholesale market, the challenging economic climate and competition from fast fashion. Mara Hoffman, *The Vampire's Wife* and Dion Lee all shuttered in 2024.

The Rhode founders could not be reached for comment on the news.

Over the years, Beyoncé, Rihanna, Tracee Ellis Ross, Khloé Kardashian, Busy Philipps, Jamie Chung, Whitney Port, Zoey Deutch and other celebs wore Rhode.

"Rhode has always been about joy, and it has been a profound joy to have been #ontheRhode with all of you," the founders said in their IG post.

Purna Khatau and Phoebe Vickers



The Reviews



Ferragamo

Holiday brochures from the '80s depicting dreamy destinations in the Caribbean islands inspired the colors, light fabrications and the relaxed, unfussy spirit Maximilian Davis imbued in Ferragamo's pre-fall 2025 collection.

The brand's creative director looked at the images to set the tone for his chromatic palette, lighting up neutral tones with pops of electric blue, and to introduce a tropical print to flank checkered patterns and his signature sleek monochrome fashion, here exalted by shades of moss green, cognac and chocolate.

The sense of refinement was exemplified by fluid viscose jersey dresses in different lengths and splashed with a graphic motif nodding to palm fronds, which gave them a whiff of '70s psychedelia. Other takes on the easy-to-approach attitude included versions in punchy solids, as seen in a cobalt frock, or via colorblocking in shirtdresses with draped skirts that echoed the key silhouette Davis paraded on the runway last September.

While these looks – plus safari jackets, tie-dye knits and accessories like raffia shoes with spherical cork heels and woven bucket bags – provided summery options to easily pack into a suitcase for an escape somewhere warm, the collection proved that Davis' polished aesthetic best resonates in the city.

His clean tailoring had an urban-chic appeal and looked sharp even when deconstructed in the shoulders. Repeatedly explored during his tenure at the Florentine house, scarf dressing also translated particularly well this season, with panels overlapping on the shoulders of shirts or on skirt fronts, adding a dynamic spin to daily staples while staying true to the brand's sophisticated allure. Ditto for bias-cut gowns with delicate lace inserts around the neckline that offered a simple yet sensual take on eveningwear.

"The way people are dressing, they want things to be very immediate. I don't think people have the energy [for else] anymore," Davis said flashing a smile. "This [collection] is very grab-and-go and every piece has been designed with the consideration of how it fits in an everyday wardrobe and every person's life." – Sandra Saliban



BUSINESS

M&S Boosts Digital Drive With First Insight

- The British retailer is now using the tech company's solution in apparel and home goods.

BY ARTHUR ZACZKIEWICZ

After successfully deploying First Insight Inc.'s "Voice of the Customer" retail solution in its lingerie category, British retail Marks & Spencer (M&S) has now expanded its partnership to cover clothing and home.

First Insight said over the past 10 years it has become one of M&S' core technology partners – along with o9 and PTC. The company said the collaborations "have enabled M&S to evolve from a traditional retailer into a data-driven, customer-centric organization." First Insight noted that by integrating its customer-driven AI intelligence engine across product development, design, pricing, merchandising and marketing, "M&S has enhanced profitability while advancing sustainability goals."

Richard Price, managing director of clothing and home at M&S, said the partnership with First Insight "has supported our strategy to reshape for

growth, as we maintain and extend our lead on quality and value and continue to drive style perceptions. First Insight's AI-driven intelligence has empowered us to get closer to our customers and offer a more compelling fashion-led experience as we seek to become more relevant, to more people, more often."

Greg Petro, chief executive officer of First Insight, said, "Working closely with Richard [Price] and his team has been an inspiring story of growth. For M&S, human-AI collaboration is a strategic advantage, enabling us to harness AI, generative AI, and human computational modeling to bring the Voice of the Customer into every product decision. With our proprietary Value Score™, M&S consistently anticipates and meets shopper needs, launching products and strategies that truly excite and inspire."

Petro said this blend of technology and human intuition "keeps M&S ahead of shifting consumer preferences, reduces risk, and consistently delivers products that resonate. It's a partnership built on shared values, and we're proud to support M&S as they continue to reshape for growth and do the right thing for their customers."



Marks & Spencer's Oxford Street store.

Using First Insight's solution allows M&S to continually listen to customer feedback and demand indicators, "ensuring new products are developed based on genuine shopper

insights. This approach has strengthened customer loyalty, improved product-market fit, and identified growth opportunities," the company said.

FASHION

How Charli XCX Became The Face of Fashion in 2024

- From Skims to Acne Studios, the superstar fronted some of the year's most talked-about fashion campaigns.

BY ANDRE CLAUDIO

In 2024, 32-time Grammy Award winner and global icon Beyoncé dropped her highly anticipated album "Cowboy Carter," which, in addition to topping the charts, landed her a campaign with heritage brand Levi's. Meanwhile, the success of pop princess Sabrina Carpenter's album "Short n' Sweet" landed her campaigns with Skims and Versace, showcasing her power to drive consumer trends and spending.

While their achievements are impressive, one artist who managed to surpass her peers and stay at the center of the zeitgeist – securing partnerships with several brands – is 32-year-old British avant-pop and electronic superstar Charli XCX.

The trendsetter, who skyrocketed to mainstream success over the summer with the release of her sixth studio album "Brat," landed campaigns with H&M, Skims, Acne Studios, Google and Converse (to name a few). Despite the rapid succession of these partnerships, Charli XCX made each campaign feel unique while driving significant revenue for the brands involved.

"[Although] celebrity partnerships are a staple in fashion marketing, the degree to which Charli XCX was featured in 2024 is remarkable," Keith Fraley, assistant professor of fashion business management at FIT, told WWD. "From a fashion business management perspective, her omnipresence provided brands with consistent and high-impact touchpoints to reinforce their messaging across multiple platforms, ultimately enhancing consumer engagement."

According to Karis Munday, retail analyst

at Edited, Charli XCX's appointment as Converse's new face was a "key strategic move" to generate buzz around the brand's Chuck Taylor sneaker. In fact, following the campaign's launch, Converse U.S. had 150 percent more canvas Chucks in stock compared to the previous year.

For Skims, her cotton rib collection campaign achieved a 35 percent majority sell-out rate – indicating that at least 51 percent of skus sold out – within its first three months of launch in the U.S. This surpassed Carpenter's Stretch Lace collection for the brand in April, which achieved a 29 percent majority sell-out rate, according to the retail intelligence firm.

Meanwhile, H&M—long-time supporters of Charli XCX, having played her music in stores since 2011 and invited her to attend and perform at events since 2016—described the buzz surrounding the launch of its A/W '24 campaign as "incredible," driven largely by the cultural relevance of its stars.

"When planning our campaign and global event series for the fall, we knew we wanted to explore the intersection of fashion, music and culture, so it was only natural to approach Charli XCX," Linda Li, head of customer activation and marketing at H&M Americas, told WWD. "While the success of Brat Summer didn't influence our initial decision to work with Charli XCX on this campaign, it absolutely cemented our belief in her as a cultural powerhouse and contributed to the campaign launch's success."

The success of the "Apple" singer's campaigns is largely driven by younger demographics, key market segments that value individuality, authenticity and cultural relevance. Gen Z, in particular, resonates with her ability to blend

hyperpop aesthetics with accessible yet aspirational fashion, Fraley noted. Her campaigns also appeal to subcultures like LGBTQIA+ communities, who appreciate her commitment to inclusivity and self-expression.

This broad appeal positions her as an "ideal ambassador" for brands seeking to grow their presence among younger, digitally savvy and socially conscious consumers, he added.

"Her partnership with Skims aligned a culturally relevant figure with an already successful inclusive brand strategy, contributing to the brand's record-breaking valuation growth during this period. Similarly, her collaboration with Acne Studios was instrumental in driving demand for high-margin, avant-garde pieces, with reports indicating a noticeable uptick in the sell-through rate for campaign-specific items," Fraley said. "These measurable results reflect how brands leveraging Charli XCX's edgy yet relatable aesthetic have benefited from heightened consumer interest, increased visibility and strengthened brand equity, all while achieving short-term revenue growth – a clear testament to the business value of such strategic partnerships."

While Charli XCX created immediate success for these brands, her influence also has the potential to foster long-term loyalty, particularly among Gen Z consumers who prioritize emotional connections and shared values.

"Charli XCX's success in 2024 demonstrates the increasing importance of aligning celebrity endorsements with a brand's core values and target demographics. Her ability to authentically represent diverse brand identities across the fashion spectrum – from high-street retailers to luxury labels – proves the value of intentional partnerships," Fraley said. "Her campaigns highlight the economic potential of cross-industry collaborations, showing how music and fashion, when thoughtfully integrated, can drive both cultural relevance and financial performance."



Charli XCX poses for Skims, Acne Studios and Converse campaigns.

Fashion Scoops

The issue is themed around sports, taking particular inspiration from soccer.



Playing The Game

Mytheresa's latest issue of print publication *The Album* is working up a sweat. Titled "Beautiful Game," the volume is themed around sports, and features interviews with Dante Bonfirm Costa Santos, Nice's soccer team captain, and designer Giorgio Armani.

Inside, Bonfirm Costa Santos — who's Europe's oldest active professional soccer player in the top five

leagues — lets readers into the secret of what keeps him fit, including the five foods that play a vital role in his diet.

Armani, meanwhile, talks about the athletes and team values that have inspired him throughout his career.

Supermodel Karolina Kurkova is also featured, starring in a sporty editorial shot in Miami. Kurkova poses in Mytheresa's spring 2025 women collections, including a hot pink Adidas jersey, matching ball in hand, and lounging against

the fence of a soccer pitch wearing a Pucci set.

The launch of the platform's 11th issue comes on the heels of its operations turning profitable during the fiscal first quarter.

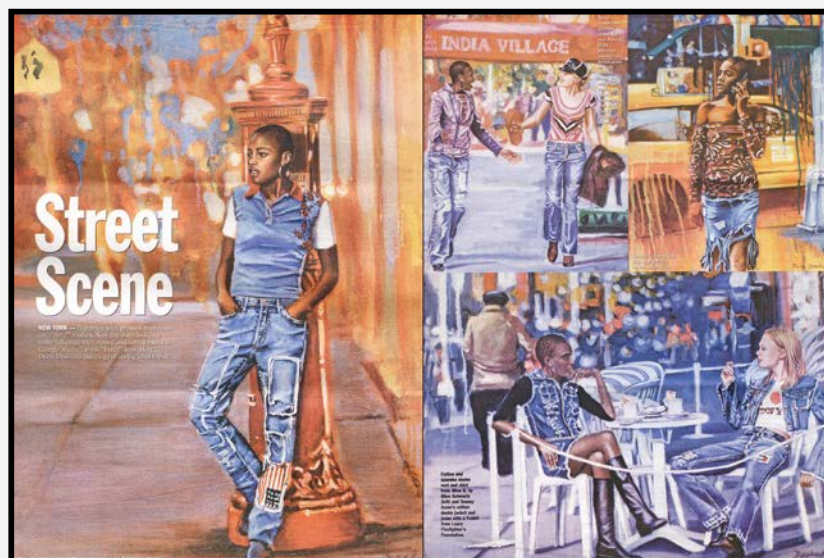
Amid a luxury sector in decline, Michael Kliger, Mytheresa's chief executive officer, attributed the company's growth to its geographic profile, with 20 percent of its business in the U.S. and 50 percent in Europe.

"We are far less exposed

ON THIS DAY

Dirty, distressed or deconstructed, WWD explored the state of denim highlighted by a vivid city backdrop painted by artist Daria Deshuk, as seen on Dec. 13, 2001.

— Jasper Brown



to China and Asia than some of the big luxury groups that are reporting no growth at the moment," he added.

In October, Kliger reaffirmed that he felt positive about the current fiscal quarter.

"I'm coming out of this fashion season with a sense of optimism. There is a good, new energy. We're not out of the woods yet, and there is still risk out there, but outside of China I'm pretty optimistic about the next 12 months," he said — VIOLET GOLDSTONE

Artist's Party

"It's fitting in here," Malcolm Washington said, nodding toward the Christmas tree in the room.

The centerpiece — grand and towering — made for a topic of conversation at Chateau Marmont on

Wednesday night in Los Angeles, bringing a festive and inviting mood to the popular lobby bar with its holiday decorations, twinkling lights and the surrounding piano tunes.

Washington is the 33-year-old son of celebrated actor Denzel Washington and has made his own mark recently with his directorial debut, "The Piano Lesson," a drama and adaptation of the 1987 play by August Wilson. The film, available now on Netflix, stars Samuel L. Jackson, Erykah Badu, Danielle Deadwyler, Ray Fisher, Corey Hawkins and John David Washington — Malcolm's older brother.

Cultured magazine, the art publication launched in 2011 by editor in chief Sarah Harrelson, highlighted Washington as part of its inaugural "Artists on Artists" issue, alongside Nigerian visual artist Njideka Akunyili

Crosby. The two first met in her L.A. studio.

"I was just fanning out," Washington said of the moment. "I'm such a fan of her work, and she was so generous with her spirit and her space and her process."

Cultured and Netflix hosted a dinner at the hotel to toast the occasion, with Washington and Crosby as guests of honor. The night brought out John, their mother Pauletta, as well as actors LaKeith Stanfield, Megalyn Echikunwoke, Lionel Boyce and Rachel Sennott; director A.V. Rockwell; artists Alex Prager and Ash Roberts; Oscar-winning costumed designer Ruth E. Carter; interior designer Brigette Romanek, and writer Nkechi Okoro Carroll, among others.

"You have a beautiful spirit," Crosby told Washington during a short speech. "I'm sure people have told you that before. The moment you walked into my studio, your positivity was oozing out of you."

Washington said he feels a connection with her work, rooted in the duality of two cultures — her adopted home in America, living and working in L.A., and native Nigeria. The artist, combining painted depictions of people and places, works with photographic transfers from personal archives, Nigerian magazines and other media sources.

"There's a political consciousness that's present in her work, but it's folded into this much larger thing about culture itself, and the people and poses and circumstances that ▶

John David Washington and LaKeith Stanfield



Inside the Alaïa bookstore.

Designer Jamie Okuma, left on the runway at SWAIA Native Fashion Show Aug. 18.



she's depicting in her work is this wonderful exploration of Black life, which I think is really wonderful," he told WWD. "My work also deals with the culture. Obviously, it deals with time and space as well."

"The Piano Lesson" tells the story of the Charles family, their journey and the destiny of a cherished piano, while exploring the underlying themes of life.

"It's riddled with so much meaning," Washington said of Crosby's work.

The same can be said of his own.

— RYMA CHIKHOUNE

Buy The Book

Shopping at Alaïa has just become more intellectual with a side of books and cake.

The Paris-based house has opened a bookstore and café on the second floor of its store on London's New Bond Street in collaboration with Claire de Rouen and Violet Cakes.

"This bookstore stands as a testament to Alaïa's deep appreciation for the arts, showcasing a selection that reflects the current interplay between art, fashion, and photography," said the brand in a statement.

The selection stretches from signed and rare photography, fashion and art books to tomes about Louise Bourgeois and ones by Annie Ernaux, recipient of the 2022 Nobel Prize in Literature.

The Alaïa café has been put together by Violet Cakes owner and chef Claire Ptak with treats to have at the store or take away.

The steel interiors of the café are a nod to the brand's founder, Azzedine Alaïa, who passed away in

2017, while the bookstore mimics a home library with its dark carpeting and matching sofas.

The Alaïa store opened in 2018 and is the first flagship outside the French capital, where it currently operates two stores and sells at shops including Galeries Lafayette, 10 Corso Como and Harrods.

Located at 139 New Bond Street — near to IWC and Fendi — the 6,000-square-foot London flagship spans three floors. The space was the former home of the vintage jeweler S.J. Phillips. The store carries Alaïa's full range, including ready-to-wear, shoes, bags and accessories as well as limited-edition pieces and couture by appointment.

— HIKMAT MOHAMMED

New Dates

The Southwestern Association for Indian Arts has revealed the return of SWAIA Native Fashion Week May 7 to May 11, 2025, in Santa Fe, N.M. And it is seeking a fashion show producer.

Following the template of last year's inaugural event, SNFW will present runway shows, activations and pop-up shops showcasing Indigenous design, as well as fashion panels amplifying Indigenous voices.

The 2024 SNFW hosted 17 Indigenous designers from the U.S. and Canada including Himikalas Pamela Baker, Jason Baerg and Patricia Michaels.

SNFW is an offshoot of the wildly popular SWAIA runway event at Santa Fe Indian Market, which has been held annually since 2014, and attracted such well-known designers as Jamie Okuma, Lauren Good Day and Jontay Kahm.

Both the Indian Market event and SNFW were



Lacoste's kids' range spans from newborns to teens.

established by Siksika curator and art historian Amber-Dawn Bear Robe.

"I'd love for this to be the global place for people to experience and to work with Native designers and models," she told WWD last year. "In Santa Fe, all the ingredients are here — the artists, designers and talent coming from across Canada and the U.S., and the collectors of Indigenous art. It's also the place the Native community comes in terms of film and television."

This year's Native Fashion Week is seeking a fashion producer to work with staff on the event, from concept development to post-event evaluation. Interested and qualified applicants can submit their proposals by Dec. 20 at swaianativefashion.org/RFP.

— BOOTH MOORE

Baby Crocodile

Lacoste has signed a worldwide license agreement for its kids' collections with American company Haddad Brands, the French brand said on Thursday.

Under the agreement, the New York-headquartered company will design, develop, produce and market Lacoste kids' clothing and accessories line. The first collection under the new license will arrive in stores mid-July for fall 2025.

The financial terms of the deal, which runs for five years, were not disclosed.

Founded in 1925, Haddad Brands is a privately-held company specialized in the children's apparel and accessories industry. It is the exclusive license holder for brands including Nike, Converse, Levi's, Tommy Hilfiger and Calvin Klein, among others.

"Haddad Brands' undeniable expertise and know-how in kids' fashion licensing are major assets for our continued development in this category," said Lacoste chief executive officer Thierry Guibert in a statement. "This strategic alliance enables us to strengthen our presence in the segment."

Jack Haddad, president of Haddad Brands, called the partnership a "true move upmarket" for the

A look from the IM Men line.



company's portfolio.

"Combined with our incredible team, our seamless collaboration gives us great confidence that the Lacoste kids' product will continue to resonate with consumers globally," he declared. "We look forward to extending the Lacoste brand in kids, making the product available to more consumers in the United States and worldwide."

Developed internally until now by Lacoste, the category accounts for a small but significant part of the business, according to market sources.

Prices for kids' collections, spanning from newborns to teens, will continue to sit in the premium range in kidswear, with current offerings priced between 30 and 100 euros.

Haddad Brands joins a compact cadre of Lacoste licensees that includes Interparfums SA for fragrances and cosmetics, Marchon for eyewear and Movado for watches and jewelry. — LILY TEMPLETON

New Chapter Unfolding

Issey Miyake will be showcasing its three-year-old IM Men line during January's Paris Men's Week, the Japanese fashion company said Thursday.

The menswear line designed by MDS, the Miyake Design Studio, gets its runway debut during the traditional Issey Miyake show slot.

It will be presented biannually in Paris going

forward, taking the place of the Homme Plissé line that had been showing in Paris since 2019.

IM Men line was created in 2021 with the aim to develop clothing that integrates design and engineering, the company said in a statement cosigned by MDS chairman Midori Kitamura and Hiroki Kaito, president and chief executive officer of Issey Miyake Inc.

Quietly debuted internationally with a London pop-up in 2023, the line focuses on functionality-first pieces that feature ideas such as three-dimensional constructions, no-sew knits and innovative materials.

Its design team, led by veteran MDS members Sen Kawahara, Yuki Itakura and Nobutaka Kobayashi, "work both as designers and as engineers at the same time," who make "design-creation and technology coexist and complement each other," the company added.

"Together, they set out to redefine clothing with the approach of both a garment's form-making and its construction — developing and advancing clothes-making as derived from the philosophy of 'a piece of cloth,'" a concept pioneered by late founder Issey Miyake.

Meanwhile, the Homme Plissé line has "grown into a brand celebrated by people around the world" in the five years since it started showing in Paris, the Issey Miyake company said.

Although it's stepping off the runway, plans for Homme Plissé's development will be unveiled in the spring. — L.T. ■