

IMAGINATION MAKES US ORIGINAL. CREATION MAKES US EXTRAORDINARY.

ISSUE 8

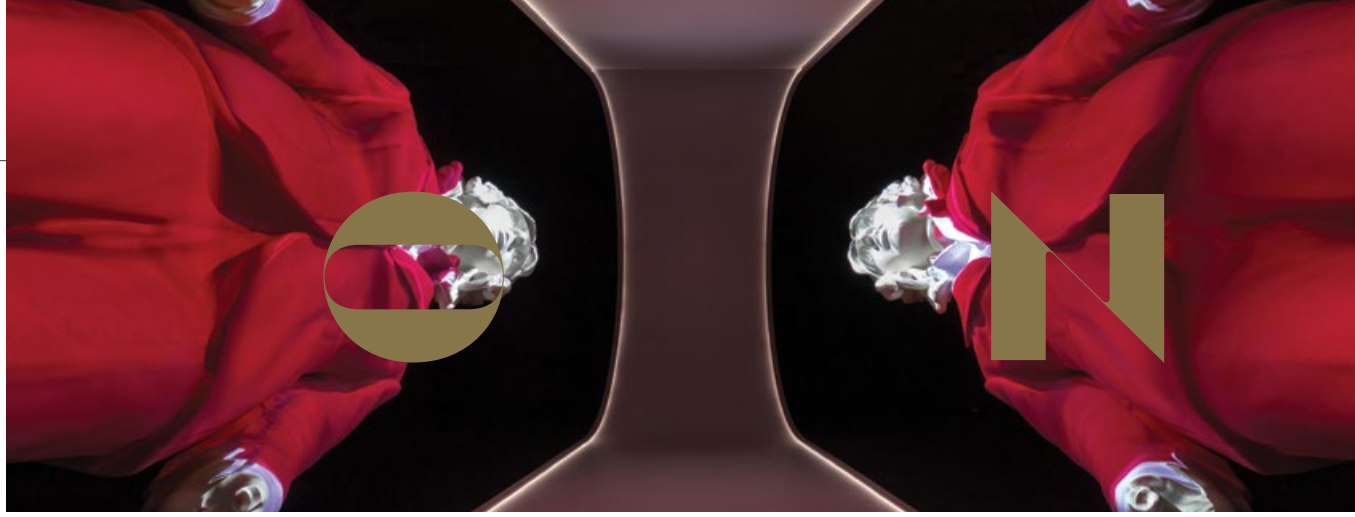
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GUCCI COSMOS EXHIBITION
PHOTO COURTESY OF GUCCI



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LOUIS VUITTON'S
"VISIONARY
JOURNEYS - THE
TRUNSCAPE"

PHOTO COURTESY OF
LOUIS VUITTON



ISSUE 8

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IMAGINATION MAKES US ORIGINAL.
CREATION MAKES US EXTRAORDINARY.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The connection between customers and brands is booming. Rock stars and celebrities are amplifying luxury brands' performance on the stage of life. New trends—across shopping, dining, and even the makeup of brands' leadership—are enjoying a boom of their own. All of these fire-hot trends are creating new avenues for an emotional connection between customer and brand, and ushering in some exciting developments. And we cover them all in this issue of ICONIC.

In "Tuned In," we explore how, more than ever before, fashion houses are turning to collaborations with musicians. Their guest appearances as creative directors or brand ambassadors infuse maisons with star power and can help musicians shape their own personal brand.

We whet our appetites for elegant delicacies in "A Cut Above," and take a peek at the reimagined, elevated experiences that traditional steakhouses are offering. Whether it's expertly seared steaks, perfectly shaken martinis, or decadent desserts, these contemporary pleasures are reservation-worthy.

You're familiar with the storied Estée Lauder brand, but in "Style & Substance," we sit down with Aerin Lauder for a behind-the-scenes look at her global luxury lifestyle brand. Aerin shares her approach to elevated, vintage style, and what matters most to her as she builds her empire.

In "An Inside Look," we had the privilege of speaking with Puck News' fashion journalist Lauren Sherman, who took the time to share her experiences writing about the intersection of fashion and business.

"Luxury Brands Aim to Build Immersive Worlds" shows us the newest interactive experiences that brands are building to engage consumers. While some brands have curated lifestyle environments that are true cinematic journeys, others turn to artists and virtual reality creators to further define their design ethos.

We also explore how the luxury beauty boom is leaving its mark. "The Lipstick Effect" studies how cosmetics can be appealing and accessible while still feeling elevated. And like beauty, the luxury watch market is also thriving. We look at a few of the newest brand ambassadors who are clocking in for classic timepieces in "Winding Up the Hype." Everyone is loving beauty and watches right now—as indicated by growing sales and expanded recognition among new audiences.

"Bon Anniversaire," meanwhile, showcases the endurance of powerhouse brands as they celebrate major milestones. Take an intimate look at how



KIRSTEN LEE
EVP, LUXURY
BROOKFIELD PROPERTIES

Bulgari threw a party unlike any other to mark its 140th anniversary, and how Tory Burch celebrated milestones with friends, collaborators, and a renewed design approach.

"The New Female Vanguard" is, simply put, about powerful clothes made by (and for) powerful women. Women are taking the helm at some of the biggest brands in fashion and steering them into a golden era of women-led labels. Dior and CHANEL are a sampling of the brands marrying empowerment, creativity, and authenticity into the zeitgeist of change at the top.

We also take a tour of some of the hottest music festival activations in "Making Beautiful Music Together" to show how high-end brand activations aren't just festival add-ons, but destinations unto themselves. Stagecoach, in particular, drew an exciting list of brands that focused on engaging with their community in fun, new ways.

As with Stagecoach, "Cowboy Couture" highlights how fashion houses are turning to country-western styles for inspiration. Chic, cowboy-inspired looks featuring fringe, denim, and bolo ties are all the rage. These trends combine the feel of the American West with strength, beauty, and inspiration.

Finally, "Shifting Tides" and "Outside the Box" highlight the booming luxury influencer industry. Creators and ambassadors integrate products into their content in ways that feel exceptionally authentic. And unboxing videos illustrate how the digital universe offers brands a chance to sell quality and exclusivity by appealing to emotion.

In this issue of ICONIC, we offer you a journey through our Iconic Collection of retail properties and take a meaningful look at what is shaping current trends. Much like the resurgence of country-western style and festivals, this issue is packed with stories of people fearlessly driving forward, and all through the lens of luxury. Sit back, relax, and enjoy this expedition.



Luxury Brands Aim to Build

IMMERSIVE WORLDS



STEP INTO "VISIONARY
JOURNEYS" BY LOUIS VUITTON
IN BANGKOK, A BREATHTAKING
FOUR-PART EXHIBIT

PHOTO BY KARN TANTIWIYAPITAK
COURTESY OF LOUIS VUITTON

Luxury Brands Aim to Build Immersive Worlds

BY SAHAR KHAN

From interactive experiences and traveling exhibitions to new product lines, luxury brands are deepening customer engagement by creating immersive, enchanting worlds.



A LOOK FROM GIORGIO ARMANI'S "ECHOES FROM THE WORLD" COLLECTION

PHOTO COURTESY OF ARMANI

Luxury brands are always on the lookout for new ways to engage shoppers and catch their attention. Some of them have leaned into curating lifestyle environments that encompass their design ethos in new ways. These brands have found ways to create fully immersive worlds that span product categories and showcase all of their offerings. In one example, a luxury fashion house could introduce furniture and accompanying accessories to join customers at home.

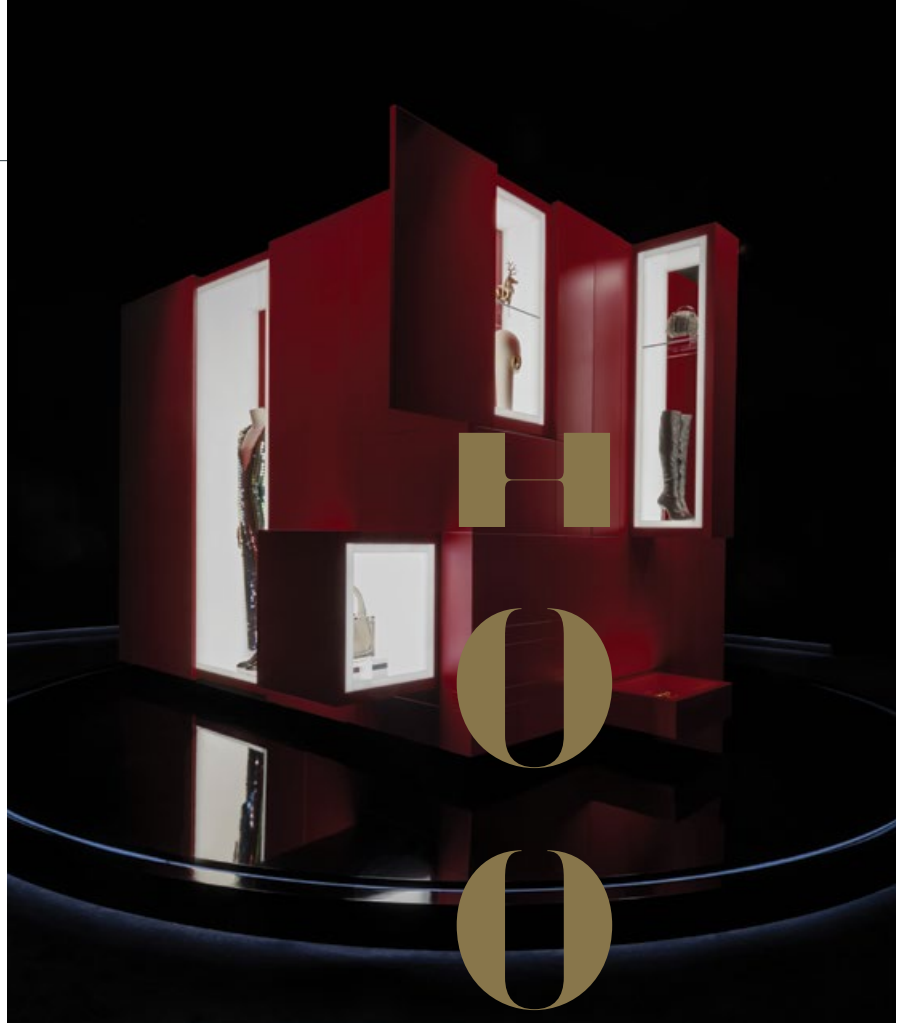
Giorgio Armani's collection "Echoes From the World" sampled this concept earlier this year at the Armani/Casa boutique at Salone del Mobile in Milan. The luxury fashion house exhibited a furniture line dreamed up as a cinematic journey through the countries that have most inspired the designer. Whether highlighting a sofa or a console, his dresses were a through line in the presentation—a midnight blue and silver strapless gown stood next to a navy bar cabinet with foliage-embroidered grosgrain fabric door panels inspired by Middle Eastern cultures.

LOEWE commissioned 24 international artists to craft a series of lamps for "LOEWE Lamps," their showing at Salone del Mobile. One of the featured artists, Kenyan-born British ceramicist Dame Magdalene Odundo, created a suspended lamp using leather curled into sharp peaks—a departure from the rounded forms she is associated with. The aim of the collection was to showcase LOEWE's dedication to working with and investing in artists, which makes a full-circle connection to the artistry and craftsmanship that goes into its clothing.

Some brands turn to the latest technologies for their immersive experiences. In 2022, Salvatore Ferragamo introduced a hologram sneaker program at its Greene Street store in New York that allowed guests to design a personalized version of its latest unisex styles. Guests could choose from 40 different variations, including adding initials and selecting desired colorways.

In 2023, watch brand Audemars Piguet partnered with the world leader in immersive virtual reality, Dreamscape Immersive, to create an immersive forest inspired by the brand's birthplace, Vallée de Joux. Titled "The Clockwork Forest," participants equipped with VR headsets and motion sensors were transported to this imaginary mechanical world, as avatars, to restore the course of time before the destruction of nature could occur.

Other luxury brands still turn to art. To celebrate the 75th anniversary of the serpentine form (its most famous icon) in 2022, Bulgari employed Turkish-American artist Refik Anadol to create an AI-generated artwork that showcased the infinite facets of an ever-changing snake for an exhibit called "Serpenti Metamorphosis" at London's Saatchi Gallery. ▶



TOP AND BOTTOM: "GUCCI COSMOS," DESIGNED BY ES DEVLIN AND CURATED BY MARIA LUISA FRISA, WHICH UNVEILS OVER A CENTURY OF GUCCI'S INNOVATION THROUGH ARCHIVAL TREASURES, HIGHLIGHTING HOW THE BRAND HAS BOTH MIRRORED AND SHAPED THE TIMES

PHOTOS COURTESY OF GUCCI



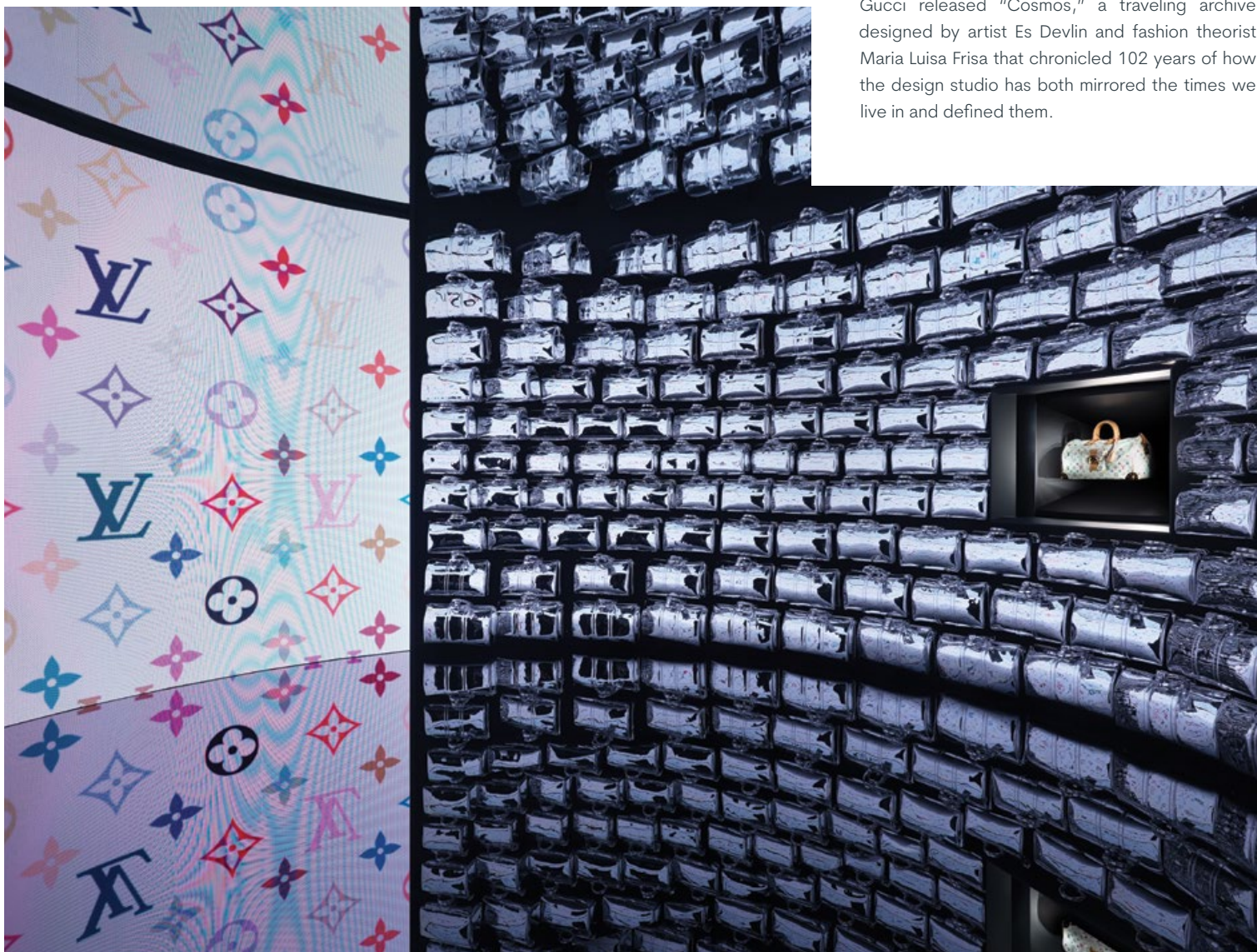
BOTTEGA VENETA'S MATTHIEU BLAZY COLLABORATED WITH ARTIST GAETANO PESCE TO CRAFT 400 VIBRANT CHAIRS FOR HIS SECOND RUNWAY SHOW

PHOTO BY MATTEO CANESTRARO
COURTESY OF BOTTEGA VENETA



That same year, Bottega Veneta designer Matthieu Blazy commissioned Italian-born artist Gaetano Pesce to create 400 candy-colored cotton and resin chairs for Blazy's second-ever fashion show for the house. The collaboration's success led Pesce to create a line of kelly green Intrecciato bags inspired by the landscapes of his childhood and displayed in a resin-and-fabric grotto at the Milan store.

Innovation doesn't mean that some brands ignore tradition, however. They lean on their heritage to connect past glories to current status. In 2023, Gucci released "Cosmos," a traveling archive designed by artist Es Devlin and fashion theorist Maria Luisa Frisa that chronicled 102 years of how the design studio has both mirrored the times we live in and defined them.



The current rendition of "Visionary Journeys" by Louis Vuitton is a four-part exhibit in Bangkok that applauds the house's 150 years of creativity. The experience includes a tunnel laden with 96 vintage trunks and a look back at some of Louis Vuitton's most successful artist collaborations, including those with Yayoi Kusama, Takashi Murakami, and Stephen Sprouse.

According to a CX Trends report, 61% of customers are excited about experiences that allow them to express themselves and create positive memories. Judging by the numbers, more and more brand worlds are sure to appear across the retail landscape.

LOUIS VUITTON'S "VISIONARY JOURNEYS" CELEBRATES 150 YEARS OF CREATIVITY WITH A FOUR-PART EXHIBIT FEATURING 96 VINTAGE TRUNKS AND ICONIC ARTIST COLLABORATIONS, REFLECTING THE GROWING TREND OF EXPERIENTIAL RETAIL

PHOTO BY KARN TANTIWIYAPITAK
COURTESY OF LOUIS VUITTON

The Shops at La Cantera



SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Bigger, better,
award-winning—
this is Texas luxury



Nestled in the La Cantera District of San Antonio, The Shops at La Cantera is a visually stunning open-air shopping center boasting high-end specialty retailers, signature dining, and boutique-style office space. Distinguished by its award-winning design and unmatched Texas native landscaping featuring lush garden courtyards, meandering water features, and shaded pathways, The Shops at La Cantera offers a welcome respite to the San Antonio community.

A truly unique space that feels naturally entwined with the area's cultural landscape.

The commitment of The Shops at La Cantera to partnering with market-exclusive retailers, luxury brands, and extraordinary restaurants, plus its ongoing mission to showcase local artists, makes it a truly unique space that feels naturally entwined with the area's cultural landscape. Whether it's for business, entertainment, relaxation, or shopping, this destination provides locals, commuters, and even tourists a place to enjoy the very best Texas and San Antonio has to offer.





PHOTOS BY NICK FOCHTMAN



THE SHOPS AT
LA CANTERA



CAROLINA HERRERA
NEW YORK

CHANEL

DAVID YURMAN

GOLDEN GOOSE 

GUCCI

JOHNNY WAS

LOUIS VUITTON

LUCCHESI
BOOTMAKER

 lululemon

Neiman Marcus

NORDSTROM

 OMEGA

Perry's
STEAKHOUSE & GRILLE
"RAKE & WELL DONE"

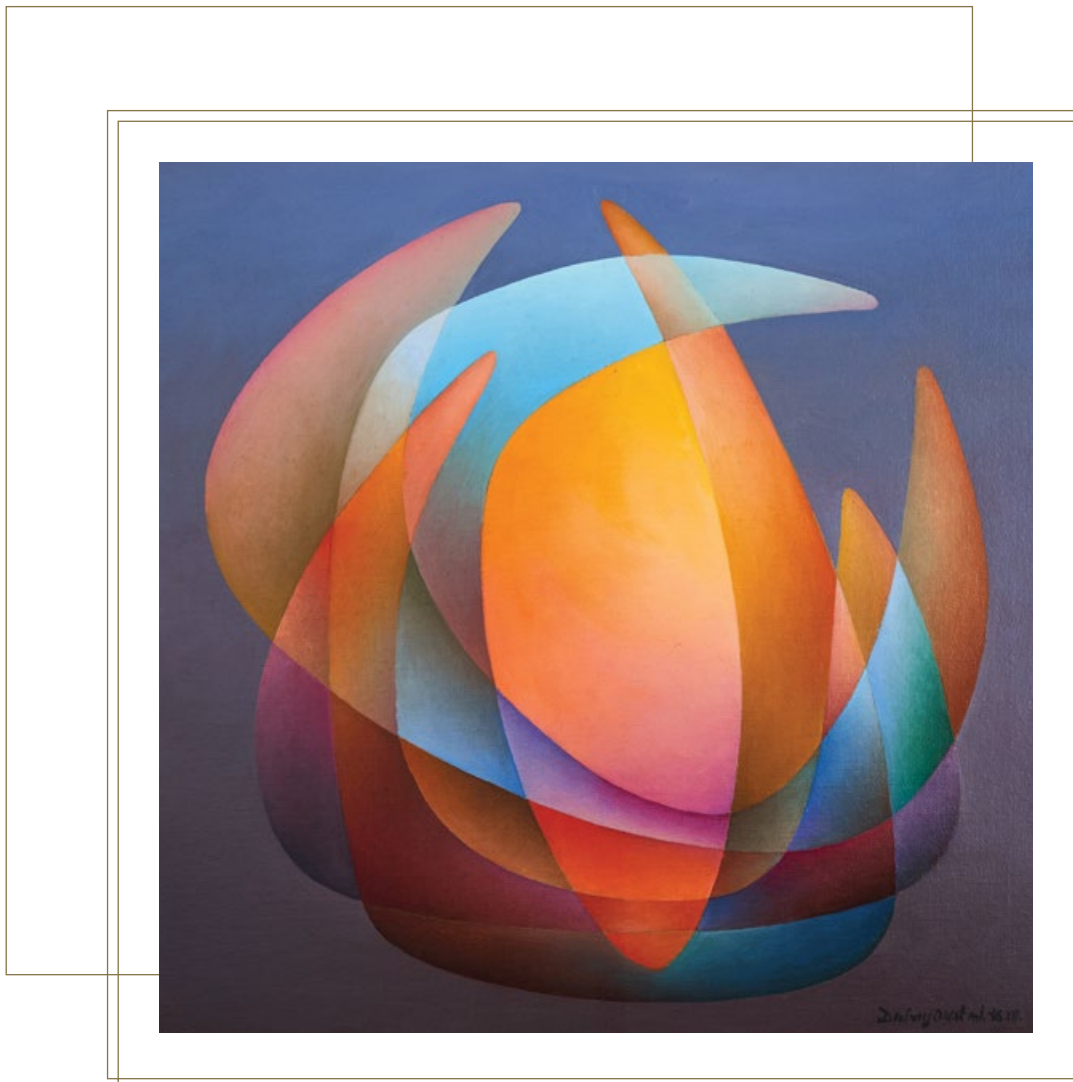
 ROLEX

TECOVAS

TIFFANY & Co.

Tommy Bahama
MARLIN  BAR

TORY  BURCH



Artist Spotlight:

Orest Dubay

"CALM HOPE 3"

The paintings by prominent Slovak artist Orest Dubay do not leave anyone cold. They are especially admired by cultured painting lovers, those who like the soft and gradual passage of one color to the second—a varied game of light, colors, and the harmony of shapes. From his works, one immediately senses how lovingly and sensitively he is painting and inserts all of his soul into them. Works by Orest Dubay are among the top paintings of contemporary, modern abstract, and pop-art.

PHOTO BY NICK FOCHTMAN

AUDEMARS PIGUET'S
COLLABORATION WITH
TRAVIS SCOTT BLENDS
LUXURY WITH CREATIVITY

PHOTO COURTESY OF
AUDEMARS PIGUET



Winding Up the Hype

BY SAHAR KHAN

The hands of time are shifting the watch world as the next generation of enthusiasts clock in.

The meteoric growth of the luxury watch market may be slowing down a little post-pandemic, but one of the largest client bases continues its nascent love affair with watches. A recent report by Watchfinder & Co., which surveyed over 2,400 Gen Z watch enthusiasts (aged 18–26) in the United States, discovered that 41 percent of respondents acquired a luxury watch in the previous year. The report also indicates that Gen Zers would spend an average of \$10,870 on a luxury watch, whereas millennials spend only half that amount.

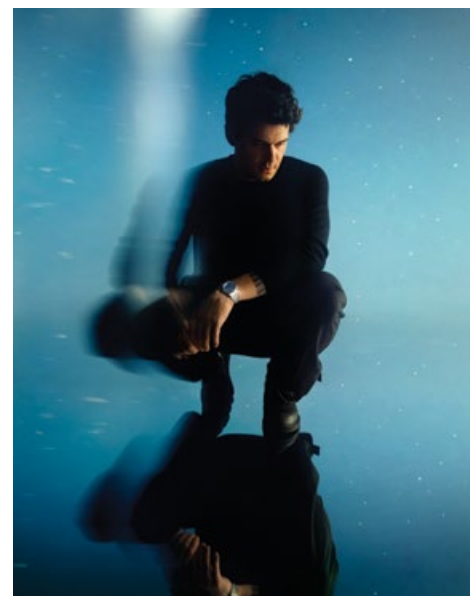
So why the interest from such a young audience? Part of the appeal comes from watch brand ambassadors. Brands hire actors, athletes, and musicians as the face of their newest release or a classic hero line. Working with younger celebrities who represent the

qualities the brand is trying to project reflects the client's aspirations back to them.

Audemars Piguet showcased this concept perfectly when they teamed up with hip-hop artist Travis Scott's label Cactus Jack on the limited-edition Royal Oak Perpetual Calendar Openworked in 2023. This is Audemars Piguet's first Royal Oak model in brown ceramic, a signature color for Cactus Jack—or as Scott calls it, "the chocolate AP." The brand also works with "creative conduit" John Mayer, who helped design another limited-edition Royal Oak Perpetual Calendar. Crafted in 18K white gold and with a deep blue dial, the instrument is inspired by the astronomical roots of the perpetual calendar. For die-hard fans of either musician, the horological connection becomes coveted.

JOHN MAYER COLLABORATES
WITH AUDEMARS PIGUET TO HELP
DESIGN AND SHOWCASE THE
BRAND'S TIMELESS ELEGANCE AND
PRECISION IN WATCHMAKING

PHOTO COURTESY OF AUDEMARS PIGUET



WINDING UP THE HYPE WINDING UP THE HYPE WIN



CINDY CRAWFORD AND KAIA GERBER GRACE THE PLANET OMEGA EXHIBITION
PHOTO COURTESY OF OMEGA



IWC SCHAFFHAUSEN PARTNER LEWIS HAMILTON IN THE PADDOCK BEFORE FINAL PRACTICE FOR THE F1 GRAND PRIX OF CANADA AT CIRCUIT GILLES VILLENEUVE
PHOTO BY CHRIS GRAYTHEN/GETTY IMAGES



RYAN GOSLING SPORTS THE STUNNING 39MM CARRERA CHRONOGRAPH, TAG HEUER'S COLLABORATION WITH THE ACTOR, ON THE 96TH OSCARS RED CARPET AND DURING HIS PERFORMANCE OF "I'M JUST KEN."
PHOTO BY FRANK MICELOTTA/DISNEY VIA GETTY IMAGES

► Musicians also conduct the score at Chopard. In ads for the brand, K-pop group aespa accessorizes Alpine Eagle watches with Chopard's Ice Cube bracelets and rings, adding a fun, sexy component to the timepieces.

Watch brands have found great success outside of music partnerships, too. Following in her mother Cindy Crawford's footsteps at OMEGA, Kaia Gerber joined the maison as ambassador in 2017. Gerber's rise on the fashion runways makes her an ideal face—and wrist—for connecting the house with a younger cohort of customers who are interested in fashion and see a horological timepiece as an extension of their style.

IWC Schaffhausen joined the world of racing when it teamed with race car legend Lewis Hamilton, who helped design a Portugieser Tourbillon Rétrograde Chronograph. Hamilton's third collaboration with the house features a platinum case and a 22mm-wide teal strap that matches the color of his Formula One team. Only 44 were made to

coincide with Hamilton's racing number, a limited run that creates urgency for fans of Hamilton and Formula One to acquire a piece of sporting history for themselves.

Perhaps the most strategic partnership last year was TAG Heuer's collaboration with actor Ryan Gosling, who had a headlining 2023 with his role in "Barbie." TAG Heuer worked with Gosling, alongside actors Alexandra Daddario, Patrick Dempsey, and China's Liu Haoran, to showcase its iconic Carrera model, which celebrated its 60th anniversary last year. Gosling rocked the 39mm Carrera Chronograph with steel bracelet in a glassbox design on the Academy Awards red carpet and during his Oscars performance of the song "I'm Just Ken." He also starred in a commercial where he portrayed an actor who falls in love with a prop TAG Heuer watch on set and tries to steal it. The action-packed ad brings the actor's comedic chops to the forefront and delivers on the brand's message—icons are made. That's an idea that many more Gen Z collectors will happily embrace and invest in.



Style & Substance

BY RIKI ALTMAN-YEE

Aerin Lauder and her eponymous brand realize the dream—and her new collaborations help expand her elegant world.

Though her family name has been globally recognizable since the 1950s, Aerin Lauder has long ensured her first name stands alone as a global luxury lifestyle brand with an unmistakably elegant aesthetic.

"My grandmother, Estée, taught me the importance of quality and attention to detail," she says of her famous grandmother, known for founding one of the world's leading cosmetics companies. "I was always inspired by her timeless sense of style, but my approach is more laid back. Estée was very modern for her time, but my sensibility is much more casual."

Though her demeanor is always elegantly at ease, Lauder maintains a rigorous pace for her ever-growing luxury lifestyle empire, found primarily at her namesake boutiques in Palm

Beach and the Hamptons. In early 2024, along with her own AERIN signature creations, she unveiled collections resulting from four major collaborations: nursery essentials and gifts with Pottery Barn Kids; home decor and accessories with heritage wallpaper brand Gracie; fashion accessories from perennial luxury leather brand Mark Cross; and entertaining pieces and outdoor furnishings with Williams Sonoma and Williams Sonoma Home. Lauder says she primarily focuses on comfort, luxury, and function, especially when designing home collections.

"I like rooms to feel lived in with an elevated sensibility through an eclectic mix of vintage finds, contemporary items, and different colors, patterns, and textures," she says. "The collections are infused with my own memories and entertaining essentials, as well as the ethos of the AERIN brand."

AERIN ROSE LIP
CONDITIONER
PHOTO COURTESY
OF AERIN



Her East Hampton garden inspired the Williams Sonoma pieces, for example, which feature shades of baby blue and pistachio green in florals and gingham intended to complement a line of all-weather wicker furnishings. A similar pastel palette also runs through her Pottery Barn Kids collection. For AERIN & Gracie, Lauder sourced a 1960s pattern and replicated it on picture frames, makeup bags, and games.

"Estée's love of birds and flowers is something that she passed down to me," she explains, and adds, "I have always been very influenced by my surroundings."

When envisioning pieces for Mark Cross, Lauder took cues from the brand's archival silhouettes and modernized them by having the shapes realized in natural canvas, trimmed in camel Vachetta leather. The resulting shoulder bag, magazine tote, garden tote, and tennis racket cover are unquestionably AERIN.

"I take a very hands-on approach, and I am incredibly involved in my business and the development of every AERIN product," she says. "It is my name on everything we make, so it has to be the best."

Even with the promise of a new AERIN store opening on the West Coast by the end of the year, another book due in spring, and potentially many more high-end collaborations in the future, Lauder says her main focus centers on enjoying the present: "My biggest accomplishment is being a mother to my two boys, and there is nothing I love more than spending time with my family." Happily, her AERIN collections and collaborations share glimpses of those familial influences.



**AERIN PINK ONYX BATH
ACCESSORIES**

PHOTO COURTESY OF AERIN



**AERIN & GRACIE
COLLECTION**

PHOTO COURTESY
OF AERIN

"As the seasons change, I like to make small updates to my home with simple touches, such as candles, pillows, and decorative accents," Lauder explains. "I am always inspired by nature, and this allows me to bring those evolving elements indoors."

— AERIN LAUDER

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Lauren Sherman
FASHION JOURNALIST AT PUCK NEWS

An Inside Look

Kirsten Lee, ICONIC's editor-in-chief, speaks with Puck News' preeminent fashion journalist, Lauren Sherman, about their shared love for the industry.

Great fashion industry journalists don't just write about what people are wearing. Their writing combines aspects of cultural observation, economic forecasting, customer psychology, and business acumen. Happily, veteran journalist Lauren Sherman of Puck (puck.news) is just such a writer, with a career that spans everything from broad international trends to which neighborhood in Brooklyn has a great shop for running shoes. Kirsten Lee, executive vice president, Leasing as well as ICONIC editor-in-chief—sat down at the Brookfield Properties regional office in downtown Los Angeles to discuss Sherman's unique take as a fashion industry insider.

LAUREN, YOU HAVE DEEP RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE WORLD OF LUXURY AND RETAIL. HOW DID YOU GAIN THOSE RELATIONSHIPS TO BEGIN WITH—AND THEN CURATE, KEEP, CULTIVATE, OR CARRY THEM FORWARD?

I am lucky. When I moved to New York, I was lucky enough to land a job at Forbes. I didn't want to be a business journalist, but there was a lot of opportunity during that time, the mid-2000s as the industry was consolidating, to write about how the world was evolving and how these brands were changing—at a time LVMH and Kering were only just becoming who they are today.

A big reason I have such great relationships [in this industry] is that I've been doing this for 20 years. I just know a lot of people. I have worked at a lot of different places and covered a lot of different stories. I started in business journalism, and had a deep interest as a consumer in fashion—I'm a big shopper: I love clothes, I love runway shows, I love all of that—which gave me this particular balance to set myself apart in the market of writers [and] brand myself as a person who can write for consumer magazines, but who can also write for business magazines.

At Forbes especially, as a general interest publication, I could write about tiny, eclectic stories. Then, at Business of Fashion, I learned more about the layers of how the [retail and fashion] business works. So, every day, I think, "Oh, I actually do know [a lot about] that topic."

Arriving at Puck, they said, "You're the expert now—write about what you think is interesting." So one day, I might write about a big luxury brand or a designer leaving a fashion house. The next day, I might write about a tiny startup that has a lot of mindshare but maybe not so much market share. The reader is trusting that I'm telling them what's important and that allows me to mix up [my stories] in a way that at any other place, I'd have much narrower of a focus.

WITH ALL THESE CHANGES, WHERE DO YOU THINK THE DIRECTION OF FASHION JOURNALISM IS GOING? LIKE, YOU'VE GOT NEWSLETTERS AND SUBSTACKS...

I think that the newsletters and Substacks are a positive development. They give people the type of content that you would have gotten in a glossy magazine. And like the way our culture has fragmented, those newsletters serve very small audiences with very particular interests. And I think that's good. Everybody has their lane, and that can be fun. I think it will develop, and we will probably see some roll-ups and consolidations.

The general interest publications devote a lot more time and resources to fashion too these days. They are covering fashion in a way that's not just about shopping. If you look at a publication like the Wall Street Journal, their fashion show reviews are sometimes on A1. That never happened before, but they also have an incredible array of shopping stories and service journalism—The New York Times, the same thing. Bloomberg Businessweek just had Bernard Arnault on the cover for, I think, the first time ever. I think fashion's treated with much more respect than it used to be.



WHAT BRANDS AND EMERGING BRANDS ARE EXCITING TO YOU RIGHT NOW?

I'm really interested in what the next five years of CHANEL look like. It's a true powerhouse in terms of consumer engagement. But they have a chance to make the future of fashion right now. They're the leaders that created this idea of a superstar designer, and they can reinvent that. Now, I'm obviously always interested in Hermès. On Running is fascinating to me. Coming into this category that is so staid and so locked in—and really developing something innovative with authority is remarkable.

I'm always super interested in activewear and anybody in that market. There is a small brand out of Greenpoint, Brooklyn, called Bandit. The activewear market is a market that still feels under-penetrated to me. There are probably a lot of opportunities there, and there could be more brands, and the market would just grow—not steal their shares. I'm interested in tiny brands like High Sport and Attersee. They could be the new luxury in America and even the new American sportswear. And you just see a lot of people—and women in particular—buying those brands outside of the typical networks. As these brands grow into their own, start opening stores, and become players on a different level, I wonder what that will look like.

HOW DOES A MODERN BRAND LEVERAGE AND NAVIGATE THE SPACE NOW WITH THE RISE OF NEW MEDIA AND FALL OF OLD MEDIA? WOULDN'T IT BE GREAT IF THERE WAS A HUGE DISRUPTION? BUT IT FEELS LIKE THAT COULD BE HAPPENING ANYWAY. HOW DO YOU NAVIGATE THAT IF YOU'RE A NEW BRAND?

A lot of these brands are media brands now, and most of their communication is straight through their Instagram account or their TikTok—not from a magazine or a newspaper. And so that's a different challenge and a different type of team is needed to build that success. It's exciting, but you must be open to change and the kind of thinker who's willing to go somewhere where other people haven't gone.

DO YOU THINK THERE'S ONE BRAND IN PARTICULAR THAT HAS DONE THAT BETTER THAN ANY OTHER?

Tory Burch—I think that Tory Burch has not been given enough credit for innovation in editorial and content. They've always had a very robust team behind them doing content—many brands focus on conversion with content. They're like, "I need to sell some stuff if I'm gonna put all this money into it." And I don't know what goes on behind the scenes, but it feels very organic and germane to the brand. And then I also think the transformation that they've done over the past 10 years with their product stands out—where there's so much in that sort of entry, designer, or contemporary market—that feels like there's a lot of sameness. And Tory Burch has, in my mind, done a great job differentiating and not losing that original point of view, but developing it into something that feels of this time and is very contemporary.

The thing about it is people change. And the original Tory Burch brand—you can still see that in the new brand. When you talk to her backstage at a fashion show, she is the embodiment of her brand. They've just done a great job, and she has a great team around her. I think that's important. She's been through so many different phases of the business, and to be this strong 20 years in is amazing. We often talk about the next Tory Burch, but to me, in many ways, she is the next Ralph Lauren.

She's the eponymous designer. She's got her own namesake brand like Ralph Lauren, Tommy Hilfiger, and Michael Kors. Where do you think the next generation of design talent will come from? Are they all stylists? Are they influencers? Are they Parsons grads?

It's one in a million. That's the thing that people forget. To be the next billion-dollar brand, there are probably two or three each generation. And so, I don't think it's about having a design degree and coming up in that way, because people don't think that way anymore. When you talk to Adrian [Joffe] from Comme des Garçons, he will say that all the young people who are the brands they back or partner with don't want to just be designers. They want to be five other things as well—and they're all multi-hyphenates. With the young brands coming up in the U.S., in particular, a lot of those people don't have traditional design experience. Maybe they're great merchandisers. There has been a challenge, I'd say, in the last 10 years in fashion, where merchandising sort of took a back seat to marketing and I think it's coming back. You really do have to have a good product first if you want to be successful today.

And then thinking about merchandisers and the department store space specifically—what do you think they're doing well? And where is there room for improvement?

Well, obviously, Le Bon Marché is great. It's good. I love going there and shopping there. We're lucky enough that we get to do that for our jobs. I think people crave these stores. They want multi-brand retail. They're desperate for it.

The challenge is—especially in the U.S.—[the consumer] thinks they want to shop in them, and then they don't actually shop in them. The challenge [for department stores] is how do I make sure that I give people what they want, which is variety and discovery. The consumer wants to go into [the store] and see something that they haven't seen before. They have the opportunity to shop for that stuff online or at directly owned, branded stores. So [to stay competitive] I think what's going to happen is you'll see them investing in smaller experiences.

I THINK FOOTPRINT IS A BIG PIECE OF THAT, MAKING IT MORE OF A DISCOVERY. OUR RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS, INCLUDING ZIP CODE STUDIES, SHOW THAT YOUNG PEOPLE WANT TO BE IN A REAL ENVIRONMENT, SHOPPING AND EXPERIENCING THINGS. AND I DON'T KNOW HOW THAT'S TRANSLATING TO DEPARTMENT STORES YET.

Yeah, it's really interesting. In a walkable city, foot traffic must have so much to do with it. If you're in a city where you can just stop by, it will take you 15 minutes, or you walk home from work which makes it a lot easier than having to set the intention of, "I'm going to take five hours out of my day when it's so easy to do it online." It's a challenge. But I truly believe that people want [to discover new things] so badly.

Well, don't you think that it kind of goes back to the environment? If you create a compelling environment for people they want to be in, whether it's across your entire property—if it's a shopping center—or just inside your store or right outside your store, that matters?

Yes, for sure.

Who does it well? The environmental experiences in the retail way?

I think that Nordstrom generally does a really good job of merchandising and

does a high-low experience. Many people going into Nordstrom have never bought a luxury good, and part of it is creating an environment that makes it comfortable for people to trade up. And I think those stores are fun for independent boutiques. I think it is incredible and such an amazing destination. You go there for a day to spend time. I also think that Saks Fifth Avenue in New York City is still great. Bergdorf Goodman is exciting...

Saks had an incredible year last year, mainly due to their partnership with Dior and the many sales they made from that alliance.

I think that comes back to that idea of people wanting to shop in a variety of environments. They want something that has someone else's point of view—burnishes your brand a bit. And I think that's what Saks did with Dior; I think they did a similar window-type thing with Prada. Prada is 90% direct-to-consumer at this point. They're just killing it. It's incredible. They have that magical mix of creativity, amazing runway shows, and product on those runway shows that people can buy because they do a good job merchandising it in their stores. Then, at retail, they have the mix of the logos and jeans—you can really get everything you want at their stores. It's a very rare brand that has buy-in from the fashion industry and the consumer. It is, at this moment, the gold standard for everyone else who is more commercial and wants to reach a consumer who isn't just shopping luxury.



PHOTO BY NICK FOCHTMAN

We've just covered two female-helmed companies, Tory Burch and, obviously, Prada. They're very different, but in many ways, they both share this really devoted vision of who they're dressing.

Yes, and I can see Tory was inspired by [Miuccia Prada]. And it is not only in the way she designs and the sort of product they put out, but in the way she's been uncompromising in her life.

Have you been to any shopping environments that, when you go there, you want to buy things?

I mean, Le Bon Marché, I always buy something for myself. I always go to Prada when I'm in Milan and buy one thing. Then, in Paris, I go to Le Bon Marché and to individual stores, too. I like shopping in the Sixth [arrondissement] in Paris. It is just very pleasurable. In New York, there are a lot of great menswear stores. Sometimes, I'm buying stuff for my husband, but more than anything, I just love going into well-merchandised shops and experiencing what they have to offer. There are a couple of great developments in L.A. that sell a mix of direct-to-consumer brands and have great food. Pasadena, that main strip, is a nice time. I was there this morning. I had my little Alfred coffee.

Lauren Sherman is a thoughtful journalist that has built loyalty among her readers and her sources by delving into the true psyche of fashion. Her journalism responds to what her readers are looking for—everything from big-picture stories, like mergers and acquisitions to discovering tiny brands that represent the future of the industry. When she writes, she invites you into her viewpoint to have an espresso with her from Alfred Coffee while she educates you on the people behind the business, the power moves they are making, and where this global trillion-dollar industry is headed.

Grand Canal Shoppes



LAS VEGAS, NEVADA



A Venetian dream in the heart of Las Vegas

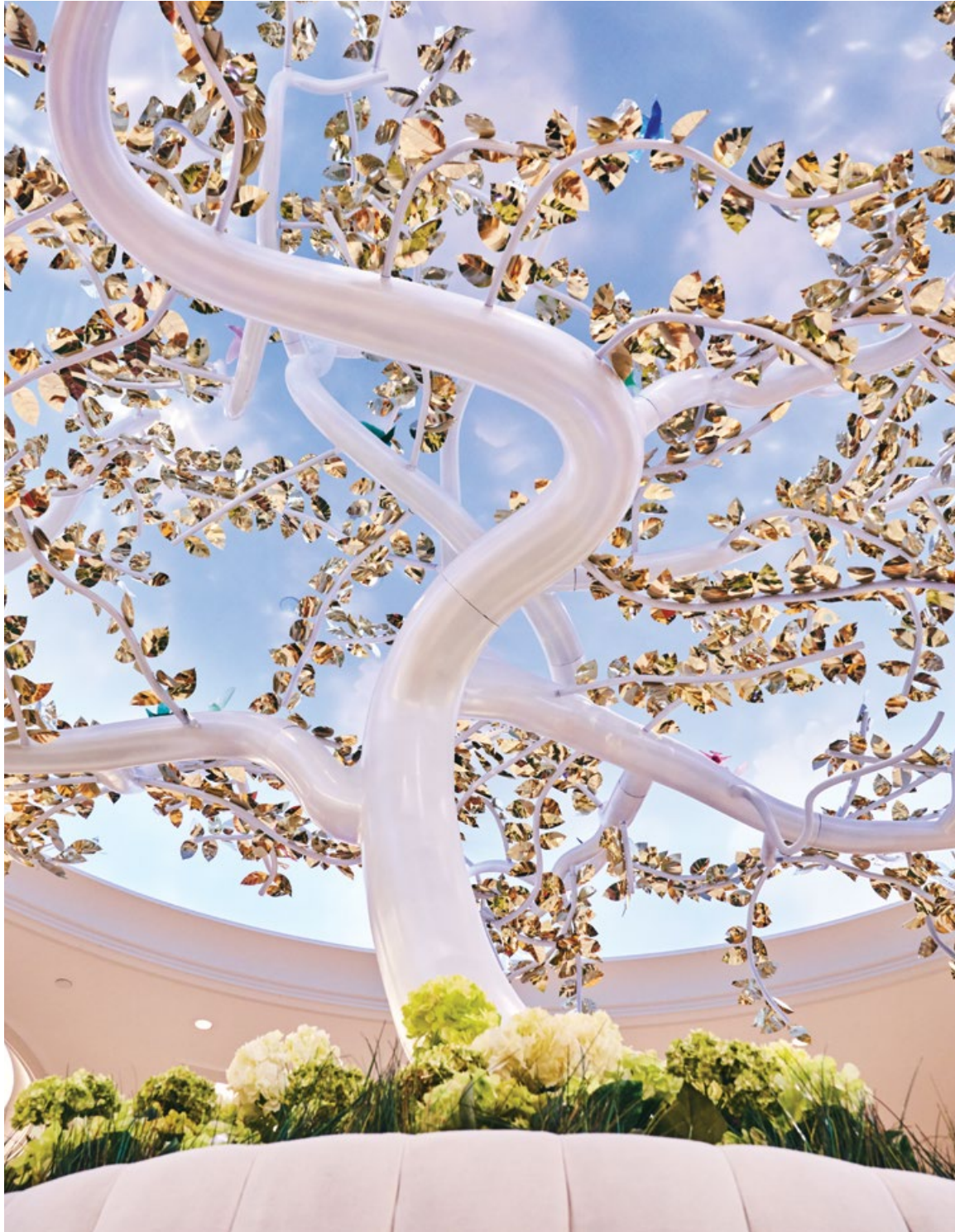


Situated inside The Venetian® Resort Las Vegas in the center of the Las Vegas Strip, Grand Canal Shoppes offers luxury experiences, world-class dining, and the enchantment of Vegas, all in one place. With over 25 million people visiting The Venetian® Resort Las Vegas each year, Grand Canal Shoppes provides guests with everything they desire—and then some. Guests are transported to St. Mark's Square in picturesque Venice by way of charming cobblestone walkways, painted sky ceilings, ornate architecture, and dazzling gondola rides.

The luxurious dreamscape of Grand Canal Shoppes features the finest collection of restaurants Las Vegas has to offer, including celebrity-owned restaurants, the most James Beard-awarded chefs under one roof, and nearly every cuisine you could dream up. Whether wandering romantic walkways and luxury shops, window-shopping by gondola, catching Atomic Saloon Show™—one of the bawdiest shows on The Strip—or stopping in for a quick bite before you see a concert at Sphere, Grand Canal Shoppes delivers not only the magic of Venice, but the quintessential experience of Las Vegas.



GRAND CANAL SHOPPES



AUDEMARS PIGUET

BURBERRY

COACH

CUT
WOLFGANG PUCK

DELMONICO
STEAKHOUSE

FERRAGAMO

FLIGHT CLUB
SOCIAL DARTS

JIMMY CHOO

kate spade

MONTBLANC

Smith & Wollensky

STUART
WEITZMAN

SUSHISAMBA

TAO

Tommy Bahama

TORY BURCH

TUMI

PHOTOS BY NICK FOCHTMAN



Artist Spotlight:

Joyce Dunn

"COLORFIELD 17-03-20 ROME " (DETAIL)

Inspired by the abstract expressionists and color field painters of the 1950s, Joyce Dunn builds up transparent layers of color and brushstrokes to convey depth and subtle movement. Dunn was born in Ontario, Canada, and presently resides in Rome, Italy. She attended the Ontario College of Art and Design and York University in Toronto. Dunn went on to teach studio art at the American Overseas School of Rome for 25 years, retiring in 2019. She has exhibited her work internationally, most recently at The Other Art Fair in Los Angeles and the American Embassy in Rome.

PHOTO BY NICK FOCHTMAN

Making Beautiful Music Together

BY ALISON ABBEY HUDAK

Music festival activations set the stage for brands to introduce their products to a larger—and often brand-new—group of customers.

For years, festivals like Coachella, Bonnaroo, and Stagecoach have been an annual pilgrimage for music lovers. As a weekend of bands brought together in a shared space with mass appeal to fans that cross genres (and countries), they're an annual hot ticket. But with the rise of the influencer, these festivals have become just as much a Mecca for high-end brands as they are for concert junkies. And while brand activations have long been a part of many festivals' draw, now they're a destination unto themselves, as the activations at Stagecoach illustrate.



POST MALONE PERFORMING
AT STAGECOACH IN 2024
PHOTO BY DEMIEN BECERRA/
COURTESY OF GOLDENVOICE

Alexandra McArthur, vice president of partnerships for country music festival Stagecoach, says they have enjoyed brand partnerships since the inception of the Indio, California, event.

"In recent years, we have seen an influx of brands that reflect trends not traditionally connected to country music," McArthur says. "Our brand programming has certainly leveled up in both the physical and social spaces with more and more brands building custom-made activations and social programs especially curated for Stagecoach."

According to Ad Age, Stagecoach is the festival to work with right now—eclipsing longtime favorite (and sister fest) Coachella. While Coachella saw a slump in 2024 ticket sales, Stagecoach sold out faster than ever before, thanks in part to massively popular performers like Miranda Lambert, Willie Nelson, and Post Malone.

While Stagecoach's long history of brand partnerships includes key players like Toyota and American Express, the festival's success is starting to draw more fashion-forward names, including Tecovas, e.l.f. Cosmetics, and Béis, the coveted luggage line from actress and entrepreneur Shay Mitchell.

This year, Béis was the festival's official luggage and travel bag sponsor, with influencers and paying customers flocking to its well-stocked activation. Mitchell herself even stopped by to interact with attendees.

The installation was a work of activation art. The Béis Pit Stop created a fully immersive experience that played on the theme of a mid-road trip gas station stop, but the station was stocked with some of the brand's beloved bags.

E.L.F. COSMETICS X BLOGGERS WHO BRUNCH FOR THE "EYES.LIPS.FESTIVAL" IN PALM SPRINGS, CA



PHOTO BY LINNEA STEPHAN/BFA



E.L.F. COSMETICS X BLOGGERS WHO BRUNCH FOR THE EYES.LIPS.FESTIVAL IN PALM SPRINGS, CA

PHOTO BY LINNEA STEPHAN/BFA



"In-person activations of this scale provide a tangible and authentic way for brands to engage by meeting the community where it is," says Béis senior vice president of brand and creative Liz Money. "The festival environment offers touchpoints to engage with attendees in meaningful ways. Whether through interactive experiences, sampling opportunities, or exclusive giveaways, events like these are a very focused opportunity to create memorable interactions that leave a lasting impression on festival-goers." Money says selecting Stagecoach as a festival partner made perfect sense for the brand amid the current cultural climate.

"Country music is really having a moment,"...
 "Its relevance in pop culture is growing, particularly among Gen Z and millennials. There's a certain buzz and energy around the festival that we believed would attract people with an affinity for our brand."

—LIZ MONEY

BÉIS PIT STOP ACTIVATION AT 2024'S STAGECOACH IN INDIO, CA

PHOTO BY FLANNERY UNDERWOOD

"We're constantly looking for new ideas, concepts, and ways to grow the event and enhance the experience for our fans," says Samantha Fernandez, vice president of partnership activation for Stagecoach. The festival "is truly special, and it's our goal to share that magic with our artists, fans, and partners alike."

Stagecoach has seen a 178 percent year-over-year increase in sponsorship revenue compared to its 2019 festival, while Béis' 2024 activation earned 3.4 million views on social media. It's proof that these partnerships are highly visible and profitable—and they're only just getting started.

"Ultimately, what we love is engaging with our fans and future fans [in real life], making that genuine connection with them and letting them know who we are as a brand," says Money. "As long as [people] keep telling us that this is something they are interested in seeing from us, we will keep showing up for them."

A MASSIVE TECOVAS COWBOY BOOT STANDS PROUDLY IN THE DESERT AT STAGECOACH

PHOTO BY JACOB MULKA/COURTESY OF GOLDENVOICE



WILLIE NELSON & FAMILY PERFORM ON THE MANE STAGE AT 2024'S STAGECOACH IN INDIO, CA

PHOTO BY JACOB MULKA/COURTESY OF GOLDENVOICE



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The major maisons are turning their ears toward the music world now more than ever as chic collaborations and musical mashups drive growth.

BY FREYA DROHAN



PHARRELL WILLIAMS AT
LOUIS VUITTON MEN'S
FALL/WINTER 2024 SHOW
PHOTO COURTESY OF
LOUIS VUITTON

A LOOK FROM LOUIS
VUITTON MEN'S FALL/
WINTER 2024 COLLECTION
PHOTO COURTESY OF
LOUIS VUITTON



Fashion is having a love affair with music—to the sound of ringing cash registers everywhere. The two cultural indicators have always maintained a close relationship, the fashion industry increasingly relies on the cachet and cool factor of chart-topping performers to gain traction and generate buzz.

While the front row at any fashion week regularly houses music's brightest stars, these days they're sitting pretty and proving to be instrumental behind the scenes. In a move that reverberated worldwide and set a new precedent for the role of "top designer," Louis Vuitton named Pharrell Williams their men's creative director in February 2023. The multihyphenate's debut show in Paris garnered Louis Vuitton an eye-popping \$42 million in media impact value, according to Launchmetrics.



A LOOK FROM LOUIS VUITTON MEN'S FALL/WINTER 2024 COLLECTION

PHOTO COURTESY OF LOUIS VUITTON



RAPPER FUTURE TAKES
THE STAGE DURING THE
"ONE BIG PARTY TOUR"
AT FLA LIVE ARENA

PHOTO BY PRINCE
WILLIAMS/WIREIMAGE

Lanvin followed suit in 2023, naming rapper Future the inaugural creative director of its Lanvin Lab concept. Shortly after, Puma announced that fashion plate ASAP Rocky would spearhead their Formula 1 partnership across design, branding, and events. The latter had an excellent sounding board for advice in his partner, Rihanna, whose music-meets-fashion-meets-beauty empire has disrupted the lingerie, makeup, and athleisure industries over the last decade.

While not all brands have the substantial budget to team up with a musician in such a major way, collaborations are becoming commonplace to test the market.

"We're seeing a lot of capsule collections between musicians and brands," notes Brian Conway, a London-based stylist who works across fashion editorials, campaigns, and music videos. "It's a smart move to tap into the following of a very successful musician."

Another way brands can be a part of the fervor surrounding a pop culture moment is to collaborate with a musician's creative team on custom outfits for highly visible performances. Adele and stylist Jamie Mizrahi enlisted different luxury labels to create a black gown for every night of her Las Vegas residency. Similarly, the collection of looks that Shiona Turini pulled together for Beyoncé's global tour stole the show.

"Beyoncé's 'Renaissance' tour was a fashion spectacle," Conway agrees. "It was like its very own runway show with over 100 designers featured throughout her tour. Sales even spiked for silver looks, and she increased brand visibility and sales."

**A\$AP ROCKY
ATTENDS THE
BOTTEGA VENETA
FASHION SHOW AT
MILAN FASHION
WEEK FALL/WINTER
2024-2025**

PHOTO BY DANIELE VENTURELLI/
WIREIMAGE



**ADELE ATTENDS THE 65TH ANNUAL
GRAMMY AWARDS AT CRYPTO.COM
ARENA IN LOS ANGELES, CA**
PHOTO BY KEVIN MAZUR/GETTY IMAGES FOR
THE RECORDING ACADEMY



**BEYONCÉ WEARS CUSTOM LANVIN
OUTFITS FOR HER "RENAISSANCE" TOUR**
PHOTO COURTESY OF LANVIN

"It's exciting to push clients outside their comfort zone. Someone who might not have been a household name but who has a strong fashion presence for public appearances can quickly become widely talked about in the media."

—BRIAN CONWAY

While fashion leans on musicians for prestige and recognition, fashion is also crucial for musicians to shape their own personal brand.

"An artist's image is imperative to elevate their success. Fashion moments, if done right, tend to go viral," Conway explains. "It's exciting to push clients outside their comfort zone. Someone who might not have been a household name but who has a strong fashion presence for public appearances can quickly become widely talked about in the media."

Having a musician as a brand ambassador or collaborator also infuses a heritage house with a level of clout that a model may not. Rosalía recently inked a contract with Dior, CHANEL was early to sign K-pop star Jennie of

Blackpink, and Saint Laurent's recent campaign featured icons Diana Ross and Michael Stipe of R.E.M. Meanwhile, CELINE and Gucci consistently work with The Strokes and Mark Ronson, respectively, to shape their runway show experiences.

Conway notes that brands developing target lists should collaborate with in-house marketing and PR teams to stay ahead of the curve about who might be the next big thing. "Develop a relationship with these talents before they go global," he says.

Working with a talented musician on everyone's radar puts a brand on that radar, too. A cultural moment is just one great collaboration away.

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COWBOY CULTURE

RALPH LAUREN
FALL/HOLIDAY 2024
RUNWAY
PHOTO COURTESY OF
RALPH LAUREN

Cowboy Couture

BY ALISON ABBEY HUDAK

The biggest names in fashion and pop culture are choosing to head West this season.



A LOOK FROM LOUIS VUITTON'S MEN'S FALL/WINTER 2024 COLLECTION
PHOTO COURTESY OF LOUIS VUITTON

When the world's most influential fashion houses sent their models down the runway for the Fall/Winter 2024 season, there was a new sheriff in town for inspiration. They collectively turned to the American West and sent out chic, cowboy-inspired looks that everyone—from celebrities to fashionistas—can't get enough of.

At Louis Vuitton's Fall/Winter 2024 Men's Collection show, menswear creative director and music icon Pharrell Williams showcased looks that played off the iconography of American Western styles. From overtly Western pieces like duster-style statement coats decked out in fringe and turquoise accents and a suit bejeweled with cacti and steer heads, to more subdued nods by way of all-denim looks (including a high-fashion ode to chaps) and bolo ties paired with traditional suiting options, the runway was filled with cowboy couture.

Meanwhile, classic American designers have been taking inspiration from the West for years. Ralph Lauren, in particular, has often shown looks that pay subtle, luxe tribute to cowboy style, and his Fall/Winter 2024 Women's Ready-to-Wear show was no different.

While the designer shared that he created the collection for a woman who "believes in quiet sophistication not defined by time or trends," his refined, minimalist pieces were punctuated by Western signatures. Belts with rodeo-ready buckles brought cowboy sensibility to ladylike dresses, cowboy hats topped off office-appropriate blazer-and-trouser looks, and fringe made surprise appearances throughout the show.

BEYONCÉ SUPPORTS JAY-Z AS HE RECEIVES THE DR. DRE GLOBAL IMPACT AWARD AT THE 66TH ANNUAL GRAMMY AWARDS

PHOTO BY KEVIN MAZUR/GETTY IMAGES FOR THE RECORD



PHARRELL WILLIAMS OUTSIDE DIOR DURING PARIS FASHION WEEK FOR MENSWEAR FALL/WINTER 2024-2025

PHOTO BY EDWARD BERTHELOT/GETTY IMAGES



► Jeweler Kendra Scott, meanwhile, lassoed a collaboration with an iconic cowboy denim brand. Wrangler x Kendra Scott, launched earlier this year, features pieces inspired by both the American West and by those who have called it home for centuries, including Texas-themed apparel and Native American-inspired jewelry. The designer also called upon country music it-girl Lainey Wilson, the reigning Country Music Association and Academy of Country Music Entertainer of the Year, to pick her favorites from the collection. Wilson wore some of those pieces on the red carpet at the ACM Awards in May, where she took home three awards—tying only with Chris Stapleton.

All of these looks are further proof that the cowboy aesthetic is influenced not only by the past but also by current culture. Country music is more popular than ever, and even famous musicians like Beyoncé, Post Malone, and Lana Del Rey are joining the genre and dressing the part. Beyoncé's recent "Cowboy Carter" seems to ask who country belongs to, while she also brings cowboy couture to her videos and live performances from that album. Post Malone has made his foray into country music and fashion, showing his commitment through performances at the Country Music Awards and at this year's Stagecoach Festival. Likewise, Lana Del Rey has a country-inspired album, "Lasso", releasing this year. Country culture isn't so genre-specific anymore.

"There has been a resurgence of the American West within mainstream culture as people from around the world are looking for strength, beauty, and inspiration," says Anouk Krantz, who's photographed the people who still call the American West home in her stunning black-and-white photography books, including "American Cowboys" and "West: The American Cowboy."



YELLOW ROSE BY KENDRA SCOTT IS PERFECT FOR RANCH LIVING, CITY EXPLORING, AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN
PHOTO BY ISIDORE MONTAG/GORUNWAY.COM



"Cowboys and cowgirls are people with an authentic, innocent spirit grounded in a common belief that if you work hard and treat other people well, you will live a rich and noble life," says Krantz.

The photographer elaborates on her view by explaining, "We are all well served to be reminded of the enduring values of the cowboy that continue to represent one of the foundational pillars of this great country." Designers and celebrities appear to be building on that idea, creating a new spin on what is considered classic and enduring for Western style. And we are all along for the ride.

THE YELLOW ROSE BY KENDRA SCOTT COLLECTION FEATURES UNIQUE SILHOUETTES, VINTAGE-INSPIRED ACCENTS, AND EYE-CATCHING HUES
PHOTO BY ISIDORE MONTAG/GORUNWAY.COM

The Shops at The Bravern

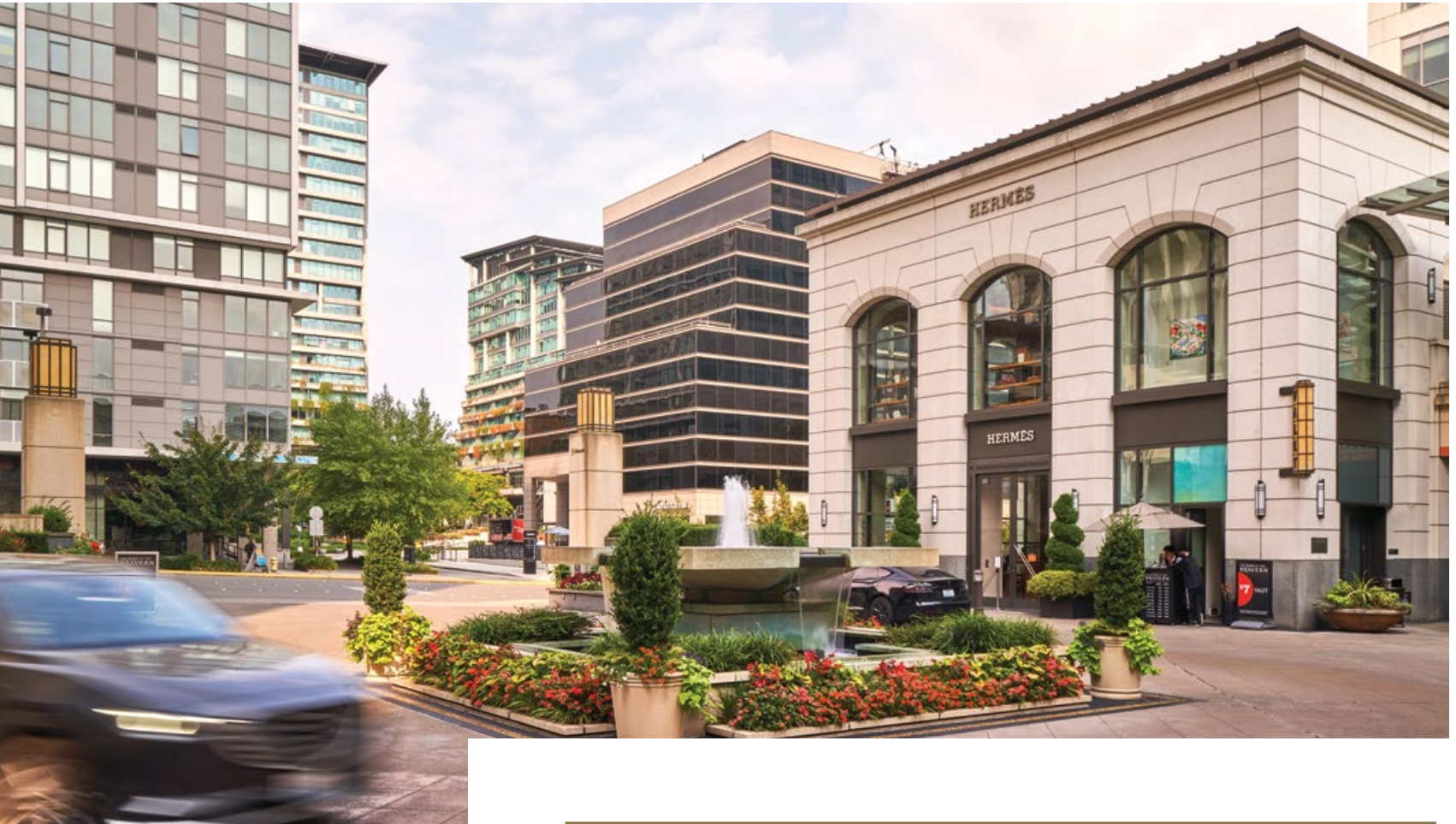


BELLEVUE, WASHINGTON

A shining center of ingenuity and progress

Just across the lake from downtown Seattle, The Shops at The Bravern is located in breathtaking Bellevue. Frequently ranked as one of the best places to live and work in the United States, Bellevue is a suburban community bustling with an innovative spirit sparked by a thriving technology sector. The Shops at The Bravern plays its part in the community by not only offering luxury retail, small boutiques, and exquisite dining, but also by providing 750,000 square feet of office space and 450 luxury residences in adjoining towers.





Exemplifying the vibrant, forward-thinking spirit of the Pacific Northwest, this center welcomes locals and tourists to tap into the latest tech, trends, fashion, and tastes.



THE SHOPS AT THE BRAVERN

While its guests and tenants may be progressive and pioneering, the architecture and landscaping of this open-air shopping center is reminiscent of old-world Europe. This eclectic blend of past and future encapsulates the spirit of Seattle, a city which consistently looks to its past to inform its future.

BOTTEGA VENETA

LOUIS VUITTON

GUCCI

MONCLER

HERMÈS
PARIS

OLIVER PEOPLES

JOHN HOWIE STEAK

OMEGA

Leica

PRADA

LIFETIME

THE DOLAR SHOP





Artist Spotlight:

Michelle Yap

"ONE MINUTE" (DETAIL)

Inspired by modern-action painting as well as ink-painting traditions across Asia, Michelle Yap paints heavy and expressive brushstrokes on minimalist backgrounds to yield dynamic paintings. Based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Yap holds a bachelor's degree in graphic design from Central Saint Martins. She has exhibited her work at the Shanghai International Art Fair and The Other Art Fair in New York and Chicago. Her work is held in galleries, hotels, and private collections around the world, including in the United States, France, United Arab Emirates, and Singapore.

PHOTO BY NICK FOCHTMAN

ABOVE

SWINGING
TOMAHAWK
FROM SMITH &
WOLLENSKY
IN LAS VEGAS

PHOTO BY EUGENE (HUGE)
GALDONES/2019 GALDONES
PHOTOGRAPHY FOR
SMITH & WOLLENSKY

THOUGH STILL STEEPED IN TRADITION,
THESE MODERN STEAKHOUSES OFFER A
REIMAGINED, ELEVATED EXPERIENCE

BY RIKI ALTMAN-YEE

ABOVE





The very word “steakhouse” conjures vivid imagery of mouthwatering dishes dotted with caviar or truffles, dining rooms swathed in leather banquettes and low lighting, and glass-encased wine cellars stretching to the ceiling. The intimate spaces are usually full of finely dressed diners celebrating special occasions or securing business deals, and adept servers performing tableside preparations with panache. Some of our country’s most upscale steakhouses set the bar even higher, continually establishing their place in our culinary history.



CUT BY WOLFGANG PUCK’S
SEAFOOD PLATEAU
PHOTO BY ANTHONY MAIR



BONE-IN TOMAHAWK
STEAK FROM CUT BY
WOLFGANG PUCK
PHOTO COURTESY OF CUT
BY WOLFGANG PUCK

“Steakhouses were invented in the United States,” states famed chef Wolfgang Puck, who was born in Austria but redefined fine dining in the United States by the early 1990s. “I think steakhouses are the quintessential American restaurants.”

CUT by Wolfgang Puck, his contemporary steakhouse concept launched in Beverly Hills, received a Michelin star within one year of its 2016 opening. Other domestic and international outposts followed, but CUT at The Palazzo Las Vegas is especially sublime. Reflecting its recently remodeled environs, the menu thoughtfully straddles the line between familiarity and surprise.

“I’ve always believed our brands like CUT and Spago are part tradition and part innovation,” Puck says. To that end, he recommends diners start with a selection of oysters or a lobster cocktail, followed by the cavatappi mac and cheese or creamed spinach with a fried organic egg on top. Then indulge in a taste of Private Reserve Hokkaido Snow Beef from Japan or any of the Prime dry- and wet-aged steaks grilled over hardwood and charcoal then finished under a 1,200-degree broiler.

THE VIBRANT LOUNGE
AND BAR OF CUT BY
WOLFGANG PUCK
PHOTO BY ANTHONY MAIR





Chef John Howie, who opened the upscale John Howie Steak at The Shops at The Bravern in Bellevue, Washington, says the types of wood he planned to use dictated his entire approach. "We do all of our Prime steaks on the mesquite grill, and we cook seafood, poultry, or pork products over applewood."

It turns out those grills also emit a heavenly aroma that wafts out and lures in diners. Howie treats his guests with an amuse-bouche to start—"from tiny little steak sandwiches that aren't bigger than your thumb to a taste of lobster bisque," he explains—and recommends first-timers try either the Chateaubriand or a New York strip steak topped with caramelized onions and gooey Gruyère.

For those seeking variety, he also offers a flight of four-ounce cuts cooked different ways from esteemed ranches typically located in Japan, Australia, and the United States. Grilled asparagus with Meyer lemon hollandaise and his five-cheese, twice-baked potato or lobster mashed potatoes are popular sides. John Howie Steak has earned a Festival Award of Excellence from Wine Spectator magazine every year since the restaurant opened in 2015, and many diners enjoy wine with their meals or drinks made with creations from Howie's Wildwood Spirits Company.



CHEF JOHN HOWIE WHIPS UP BANANAS FOSTER TABLESIDE AT JOHN HOWIE STEAK

PHOTO BY ANNEMARIE ZARBA

THE BAR AT JOHN HOWIE STEAK
PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN HOWIE STEAK

WHISTLEPIG DOUBLE MALT 18-YEAR-OLD 5TH EDITION RYE AT JOHN HOWIE STEAK
PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN HOWIE STEAK





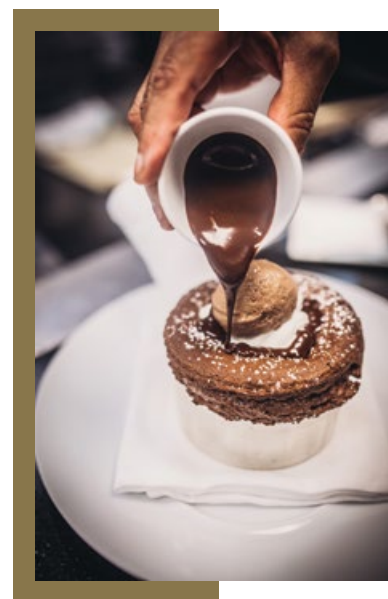
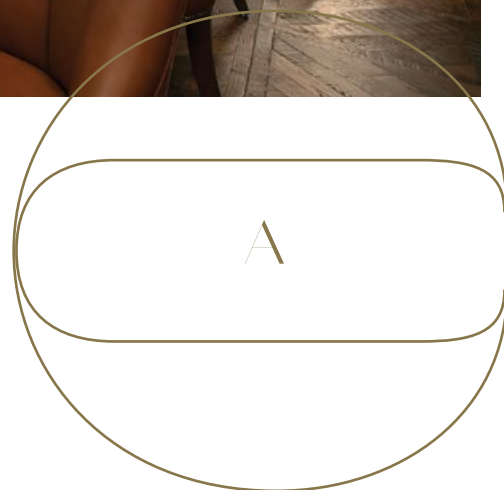
Another steakhouse staple, the martini, is highly esteemed at Perry's Steakhouse & Grille. The Martini 79, named after the year Perry's opened its first restaurant, is made with organic vodka and a rinse of extra dry vermouth, then presented with bleu cheese-stuffed olives, a lemon twist, and a Blue Point oyster on the half shell. The drink is especially popular at the award-winning Perry's Steakhouse & Grille at The Shops at La Cantera in San Antonio, Texas. Diners there enjoy USDA Prime aged beef cut fresh daily, seasoned with a signature blend, served on a hot cast-iron plate, and topped with the brand's signature steak butter. Anyone familiar with Perry's knows that the steakhouse is equally known for its seven-finger-high pork chop, sourced in Texas and carved tableside during dinner service.

Smith & Wollensky, one of the country's most recognizable steakhouse brands, runs its ranch at Snake River Farms in Idaho and sources from Double R Ranch in Central Texas. Now celebrating nearly a half-century in business and claiming to be "the only national steakhouse brand devoted to dry-aging and hand-carving USDA Prime steaks in-house," Smith & Wollensky continues to evolve and expand across the country.

At its location at Grand Canal Shoppes at The Venetian® Resort Las Vegas, diners can watch gondolas float by while they indulge in classics like tableside steak tartare or modern selections such as octopus cocktail, steaks enhanced with a gorgonzola crust or roasted bone marrow topping, and sides including potato rosti with fresh horseradish and Hackleback caviar.

Lest we forget dessert, a cornerstone of the steakhouse experience, Smith & Wollensky proudly offers tableside flambéed Baked Alaska, and John Howie Steak has tableside bananas Foster à la Brennan's Restaurant in New Orleans. Perry's Steakhouse & Grille has three dessert offerings licked by flames: its version of bananas Foster, a pecan delight called Nutty D'Angelo, and the tableside lemon bar. CUT keeps it cool with cheesecake pavlovas and Valrhona chocolate soufflés with chocolate ice cream.

No matter the course, each of these steakhouses offers something innovative and delicious, ensuring their diners return time and time again.



CUT BY WOLFGANG PUCK'S
CHOCOLATE SOUFFLE
PHOTO BY ANTONIO DIAZ



THE DINING ROOM AT SMITH & WOLLENSKY IN LAS VEGAS
PHOTO BY JOHN MARTORANO

THE SWINGING TOMAHAWK FROM SMITH & WOLLENSKY IN LAS VEGAS

PHOTO BY EUGENE (HUGE) GALDONES/2019 GALDONES PHOTOGRAPHY FOR SMITH & WOLLENSKY

ABOVE

FASHION'S FEMALE



IRIS VAN HERPEN AT THE
2022 MET GALA
PHOTO BY JAMIE MCCARTHY/
GETTY IMAGES



DESIGNER MARIA GRAZIA CHIURI TAKES
A BOW AT THE CHRISTIAN DIOR HAUTE
COUTURE FALL/WINTER 2022-2023 SHOW
PHOTO BY ESTROP/GETTY IMAGES



BRUNA MARQUEZINE, TORY
BURCH, AND UMA THURMAN AT
THE 2024 MET GALA
PHOTO BY ESTROP/GETTY IMAGES

VANGUARD

A new generation of women has taken the helm at some of the biggest brands in fashion, ushering in a golden era of women-led labels.

BY FREYA DROHAN

When Maria Grazia Chiuri took the helm as creative director of the historic house of Dior in 2016, a simple white T-shirt from her debut collection went viral. The garment featured the statement from the essay and TED talk by Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie “We Should All Be Feminists” and laid the foundation for what to expect from the maison’s first-ever female designer—powerful clothes made for powerful women.

At the time, Chiuri explained that while Dior had always been about femininity, that notion was created through the lens of multiple male designers.

“I thought to myself, ‘if Dior is about femininity, then it is about women. And not about what it was to be a woman 50 years ago, but to be a woman today,’” she says.

Likewise, Delphine Arnault has been at the forefront of LVMH’s success, shifting its focus in a meaningful way. The eldest of the Arnault children, she is the driving force behind the LVMH Prize for Young Designers and proved instrumental in recruiting talent such as Raf Simons at Dior, Jonathan Anderson at LOEWE, and Nicolas Ghesquière at Louis Vuitton. Now CEO and chair of Dior, she has been making history and influencing change since 2003, when she was the first woman appointed to the board of LVMH.



DIOR CEO DELPHINE ARNAULT AT THE ÉLYSÉE PALACE
PHOTO BY CHRISTIAN LIEWIG-CORBIS/GETTY IMAGES



CHIARA FERRAGNI AT THE CHRISTIAN DIOR HAUTE COUTURE SPRING SUMMER 2017 SHOW
PHOTO BY EDWARD BERTHELOT/GETTY IMAGES

“I thought to myself, ‘if Dior is about femininity, then it is about women. And not about what it was to be a woman 50 years ago, but to be a woman today.’”

—MARIA GRAZIA CHIURI

Another leader in the fashion world breaking the glass ceiling is Leena Nair, who became the only woman of color helming a major global luxury brand when she was named CEO of CHANEL in 2022. More than 60 percent of management positions at CHANEL (valued at \$56 billion) are held by women, proving just how profitable collective female empowerment can be.

CHANEL CEO LEENA NAIR
PHOTO BY MATTEO PRANDONI/BFA



Powerful women are leading but also designing for brands—resulting in entirely new ways to express what women want to wear. From Chemena Kamali’s unanimously applauded recent debut at Chloé to what editors call the “Toryaissance” regarding Tory Burch’s new and highly sought-after runway collections, female designers are rightfully receiving critical and commercial acclaim.

The Costume Institute at Manhattan’s Metropolitan Museum of Art even dedicated an entire exhibit to the premise of “Women Dressing Women” in the fall of 2023. The curation explored the legacy of pioneering couturiers and championed innovative designers of the moment, such as Diane von Furstenberg, Norma Kamali, Betsey Johnson, Phoebe Philo, Simone Rocha, Iris van Herpen, Laura and Kate Mulleavy of Rodarte, Collina Strada’s Hillary Taymour, and Anifa Mvuemba of Hanifa.

“When I think of women-led brands, I think of empowerment, intention, action, creativity, and authenticity,” says Federica Parruccini, a brand and communications strategist. “I find that female creators inspire loyalty and admiration among women [through] intentional community building, friendships that come with experience, and connecting over common interests.”

Phoebe Philo, who had a leading role in how women the world over dressed thanks to influential stints at Chloé and CELINE, is still considered a gold standard reference when it comes to the appeal of female designers. Parruccini recognizes this and states, “Women know what women want and how they want to feel. I still remember trying on Philo’s Celine for the first time. Everything was perfect. Whether it’s through tailoring or versatile silhouettes, female-designed pieces have a way of making women feel confident and comfortable. There is a certain sensibility there.”

Having worked alongside Sarah Burton at Alexander McQueen, Ulla Johnson, Alejandra Alonso Rojas, and now Grover Rad’s Lizzie Grover Rad, Parruccini is keenly aware that their success comes down to an unrivaled understanding of how garments should fit different body types.

“Women like to design for themselves and their bodies and what they know their friends will love in order to feel inherently good and cool in. Each season, their customers know what fit they are getting, and they look forward to updated styles, prints, and fabrics,” she explains. “It’s important, too, especially if it’s a woman designing for other women, that there is a visible face behind the brand, with some type of presence and emotional resonance.”

With these kinds of philosophies motivating the women leading and designing for luxury brands, their customers are sure to feel empowered through what they choose to wear.

SOME OF FASHION’S FEARLESS
FEMALE LEADERS SOUND OFF.

“My approach to work has always been rather simple and pragmatic, but more than ever, I feel truthfulness and a realness will be leading me going forward.”

— VIRGINIE VIARD

“When you are a woman making clothes for women, then fashion is not just about how you look. It is about how you feel and how you think.”

— MARIA GRAZIA CHIURI

“Creating communities is so critical, where women have access to information and each other, as well as to men. A big part of our foundation talks about having men as part of the conversation when it comes to women’s issues because we could be talking among ourselves but not creating change.”

— TORY BURCH

“I wanted to be an empowered woman, and I became an empowered woman. And now, I want to empower every woman. I do it through my clothes, I do it through my words, I do it through my money, I do it through everything.”

— DIANE VON FURSTENBERG

“If I can have a seat at that table—where the decisions are made—I want to be there.”

— STELLA MCCARTNEY

“I’ve spent so much of my life hearing that I can’t do something because I’m a girl, especially the first 15, 20, 25 years of my life. And then afterwards, you stop listening.”

— LEENA NAIR

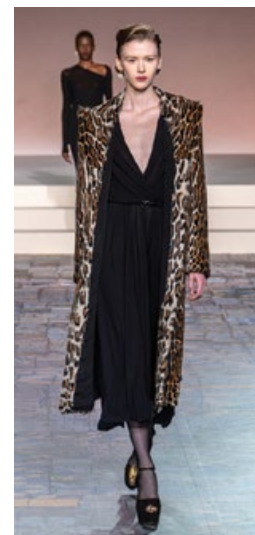
FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:

PHOEBE PHILO’S CHLOÉ FALL 2004
READY TO WEAR RUNWAY SHOW
PHOTO BY DOMINIQUE MAITRE/WWD/
PENSKE MEDIA VIA GETTY IMAGES

MARIA GRAZIA CHIURI’S DIOR
PRE-FALL 2024 SHOW HELD AT
THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM
PHOTO BY RODIN BANICA/WWD VIA
GETTY IMAGES

PHOEBE PHILO’S CHLOÉ FALL 2004
READY TO WEAR RUNWAY SHOW
PHOTO BY DOMINIQUE MAITRE/WWD/
PENSKE MEDIA VIA GETTY IMAGES

MARIA GRAZIA CHIURI’S DIOR
PRE-FALL 2024 SHOW HELD AT
THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM
PHOTO BY RODIN BANICA/WWD VIA
GETTY IMAGES



Pioneer Place



PORTLAND, OREGON



PIONEER
PLACE

Thoughtfully situated in the heart of downtown Portland, Pioneer Place offers tourists and trendy residents an eclectic mix of market-exclusive luxury retailers, fashionable boutiques, one-of-a-kind shops and eateries, and a 35,000-square-foot flagship Apple store—perfect for a city whose population thrives on forward-thinking ingenuity.

With over 2.5 million residents and more than 12 million tourists visiting Portland annually, Pioneer Place is located at one of the highest pedestrian-trafficked intersections in Portland with convenient access to public transit and freeways. This luxury center is a shopping, dining, and entertainment oasis for busy commuters, hard-working locals, and buzzing tourists alike. It's the perfect place to indulge in a kaleidoscopic view of Portland's ever-evolving culture, population, and taste.

Exclusive luxury
for a fashion-
conscious city



鼎泰豐
DIN TAI FUNG

GOLDEN GOOSE ★

GUCCI

LOUIS VUITTON

PUNCH BOWL
SOCIAL

SAINT LAURENT

TIFFANY & CO.

TORY BURCH

TUMI

ZARA



PHOTOS BY NICK FOCHTMAN



Artist Spotlight:

Maude Kerns

"UNTITLED" (DETAIL)

This is an untitled and unsigned oil on cardboard painting, consisting of overlapping abstract forms. The piece has belonged to the family of Maude Kerns since Maude's death in 1965. It was first in the possession of Maude's great-niece, Leslie Brockelbank—a patron of Maude Kerns Art Center—and then Leslie's daughter, Mary Jane Griffiths, gifted it, along with other works on paper, to the Maude Kerns Art Center in 2020. The Art Center displayed it in an exhibition titled "New Acquisitions: The Work of Maude I. Kerns" in September 2020.

PHOTO BY NICK FOCHTMAN



H I M
L H U
O T H O K
M I L
M O R

The beauty boom is here to stay as luxury brands lean in.

BY FREYA DROHAN

RABANNE FAMOUS
LIPCOLOR MATTE
LIPSTICK
PHOTO COURTESY
OF RABANNE

The popular "lipstick effect" theory—where sales of a less-costly luxury item soar during times of economic uncertainty compared to more expensive goods—has taken on a new meaning for brands.

According to consulting firm McKinsey, the beauty market is expected to reach \$580 billion by 2027, so it's no surprise that executives are betting big on cosmetics to catapult sales and gain recognition among a new audience, no matter the state of the economy.

Hubert de Givenchy originally launched Givenchy Parfums with Audrey Hepburn as his muse for the debut fragrance. Some 60 years later, the brand's viral Prisme Libre brightening powder has become the star of the show—and the subject of 41 million posts on TikTok. This product, the top-selling loose powder in Asia, has also ensured the Givenchy name remains on consumers' minds and wish lists, even when the fashion label has been without a creative director. In other words, this particular uncertainty hasn't kept consumers from purchasing Givenchy beauty products.

Similarly, heritage houses like CHANEL, Dior, and Saint Laurent have been parlaying their allure into prestige cosmetics for decades, highlighting the continual desire from consumers to purchase luxury beauty items. Despite the saturated category, it hasn't deterred other luxury brands from following suit. In 2019, Gucci added a prettily packaged offering amid its Alessandro Michele-era maximalism, and in the spring of 2020, Hermès launched its own makeup line, starting with a selection of lipsticks, closely followed by blush and nail enamel. Following suit, Valentino then capitalized on its love affair with punchy colors to launch cosmetics in 2021. In recent months, we've seen rollouts from CELINE, Dolce&Gabbana, Prada, and Rabanne.

LE ROUGE CELINE SATIN LIPSTICK
PHOTO COURTESY OF CELINE



CELINE BEAUTÉ
PHOTO COURTESY OF CELINE





RABANNE
SHIMMER BOMB
PHOTO COURTESY
OF RABANNE

How does a brand ensure they make noise in the beauty arena, even in uncertain times?

By reinventing the wheel a little, says Rabanne Brand vice president Jerome Leloup. Especially when enticing a younger, cooler crowd.

"Most brands have a top-down approach. We said, 'Let's have a bottom-up approach' like a collective hub or a creative lab," Leloup explains. "For a younger consumer who thinks these couture brands are too 'mum looking' or too expensive, we thought, 'let's do a fashion approach with all the fun and honesty of an indie brand.'"

Ensuring the offering is appealing and accessible while still feeling elevated is key. Rabanne Beauty exploded onto the scene with all products priced between \$20 and \$40, in conjunction with a rebrand (the word "Paco" was dropped from the brand name) and a buzzy H&M collaboration that piqued Gen Z's interest.

"We wanted to be as welcoming as possible. In the campaign, there are many different styles of girls and guys," Leloup says. "We tried to be that one brand that does what the cool brands do and what the super high-end brands do with clean, vegan, and cruelty-free products."

For the launch, Rabanne Beauty street-cast new faces and invited them to share their thoughts on product development. "Our tribe is very much the TikTok kids who want to show their skills," Leloup adds.

This in-depth knowledge of influencers and what entices them is imperative. Before his departure as the artistic, creative, and image director of CELINE Beauté, Hedi Slimane shared a teaser that the forthcoming CELINE Beauté—the first cosmetics line in CELINE's nearly 80-year history—will be all about "high-end, luxurious objects" inspired by 18th-century French classicism, particularly Louis XVI's gold jewelry and the minimalism of Art Deco. Slimane called it "couture products that serve all beauty rituals" and added that CELINE Beauté would speak to the French idea of femininity and allure, which continues to fascinate shoppers worldwide.

Moving from French girl-approved effortlessness to easy Italian glamour, Dolce&Gabbana is renowned for the latter. Unveiled in April, the brand's first beauty offering is brimming with ingredients native to Italy, such as a plumping lip oil with Italian mint extract and a primer boasting Italian bergamot and seawater. Further enticing consumers, the Eye Dare You eye shadow palette looks like a pocket-sized version of the \$5,000 DG Logo Box Bag but with an \$89 price tag. It's no wonder the brand statement reads that this new focus is "an ode to beauty, fashion, and Italian style that now materializes in a completely new range of products that speaks to everyone, no one excluded."

The expansion of existing fine beauty lines and the addition of high-end brands who have gotten into the cosmetics and perfume game serves to illustrate that there is a continual market for more affordable items from luxury brands. The lipstick effect is in full effect, providing brands with the confidence to keep innovating with their products.



RABANNE
EYEPHORIA MINI
EYESHADOW
PALETTE DUO
PHOTO COURTESY
OF RABANNE



RABANNE
EYEPHORIA
FAMOUS MASCARA
PHOTO COURTESY
OF RABANNE



RABANNE
EYEPHORIA MINI
EYESHADOW
PALETTE DUO
PHOTO COURTESY
OF RABANNE



BO ANNIVE

AUDEMARS PIGUET ROYAL
OAK OFFSHORE SELF-WINDING
CHRONOGRAPH 42MM BLACK CERAMIC

PHOTO COURTESY OF AUDEMARS PIGUET



RS AIRE

Birthdays are big business for brands, offering a moment to capitalize on a maison's lasting legacy.

BY FREYA DROHAN

LIU YIFEI, ANNE HATHAWAY, AND
PRIYANKA CHOPRA AT BULGARI'S
140TH ANNIVERSARY
PHOTO BY GERMAN LARKIN

In today's rapid cycle of trends, viral videos, and fast shifts in fashion, it's meaningful when a global luxury brand has staying power. Powerhouse brands show us what they're made of when celebrating a major milestone.

Take, for instance, Bulgari—an epitome of European elegance. In May 2024, the brand took over the city of its founding, Rome, to throw a party unlike any other to mark its 140th anniversary. Ambassadors, including Anne Hathaway, Shu Qi, and Priyanka Chopra, descended on the Italian capital, with the latter wearing the most precious high jewelry piece ever created by Bulgari.



BULGARI AETERNA
HIGH JEWELRY
PHOTO BY PIETRO S.
D'APRANO/
GETTY IMAGES



BULGARI AETERNA – SERPENTI
AETERNA NECKLACE

PHOTO BY ANTONIO BARRELLA



The Serpenti Aeterna necklace that sparkled around Chopra's décolletage incorporated seven pear-shaped diamonds totaling 140 carats, one for each year of the brand's illustrious history. Referred to as "the necklace of the century," it is reportedly worth \$40 million. An awe-inspiring jewelry show during the Bulgari party featured the Serpenti Aeterna and captivated audiences at the ancient baths and open-air museum, Terme di Diocleziano (Baths of Diocletian). Styled by Carine Roitfeld, a host of world-famous faces took to the runway to model necklaces, bracelets, rings, and earrings, including Isabella Rossellini and Mariacarla Boscono.

BULGARI AETERNA HIGH JEWELRY
EVENT AT ALTARE DELLA PATRIA

PHOTO BY ELISABETTA VILLA/GETTY
IMAGES FOR BVLGARI



Powerhouse brands show us what they're made
of when celebrating a major milestone.

To coincide with the evening of extravagance—which also featured musical performances, dance recitals, and a dinner prepared by a Michelin-starred chef—an immersive installation created by Dutch designer Sabine Marcelis was gifted to the city of Rome under the patronage of Fondazione Bulgari. The spectacle also introduced the Aeterna, Bulgari's new high-end collection, which offers over 500 creations including watches, bags, jewelry, and fragrances—all shoppable or open for instant inquiries online.

The sophisticated celebration set a high bar for luxury brands to mark their own upcoming anniversary celebrations. Next year, revered Swiss watchmaker Audemars Piguet is readying to blow out 150 candles on the cake. Recently, it whetted customers' appetites by launching the black ceramic Royal Oak Offshore Selfwinding Chronograph in line with the 30th anniversary of the celebrity-favored Royal Oak Offshore collection. The limited-edition timepieces were inspired by the "End of Days" watch, originally released in 1999 in partnership with the film's star, Arnold Schwarzenegger. Making it ultra-special, only 500 of the collectors' timepieces—valued at \$62,100—were created.



AUDEMARS PIGUET ROYAL OAK
OFFSHORE SELFWINDING
CHRONOGRAPH IN BLACK CERAMIC

PHOTO COURTESY OF AUDEMARS PIGUET

As for titans of American fashion, two stalwarts—Marc Jacobs and Tory Burch—celebrated their 40th and 20th years in business, respectively. Marc Jacobs called in friends and collaborators including designer Anna Sui, makeup maestro Pat McGrath, stylist Alastair McKimm, director Sofia Coppola, Supreme's former creative director Tremaine Emory, and artist Stephen Sprouse, among others, to reimagine pieces from his archives, which were launched in special drops. Ahead of New York Fashion Week, Jacobs returned to the Park Avenue Armory for a surprise off-calendar show that fused an array of references including paper dolls, The Supremes, aughts nostalgia, and Stepford Wives—making for images that reverberated around the world, even before the models' finale walk.

Twenty years in, Tory Burch has said she feels like she's just getting started as editors cheer on what many call the "Toryaissance," thanks to her renewed, reinvigorated, and refreshed design approach and covetable runway collections. Burch kicked off the anniversary year in February with a New York Fashion Week show at the New York Public Library and will host additional celebrations to mark her 20-year milestone throughout 2024.

As with Tommy Hilfiger, who is gearing up to celebrate his brand's 40th anniversary in 2025 with collaborations and activations, these designers and fashion houses prove that as long as you maintain the luxe appeal that you're known for, age might be just a number—but experience and wisdom are priceless.

IRINA SHAYK WALKS THE RUNWAY AT THE TORY BURCH FALL/WINTER 2024 SHOW

PHOTO BY VICTOR VIRGILE/GAMMA-RAPHO VIA GETTY IMAGES



MARC JACOBS SPRING 2024 READY-TO-WEAR SHOW AT THE ARMORY IN NEW YORK

PHOTO BY NINA WESTERVELT/WWD VIA GETTY IMAGES



BVLGARI'S VISTA AETERNA INSTALLATION
PHOTO COURTESY OF BVLGARI



Shifting Tides

BY FREYA DROHAN

A new variety of brand ambassadors exert their influence on luxury fashion.

GSTAAD GUY AT
LORO PIANA FALL/
WINTER 2023
PRESENTATION
PHOTO BY ASTRA
MARINA/BFA



LILLY SISTO
PHOTO BY MATTEO PRANDONI/BFA

Have any content creators or internet personalities influenced you to try a new brand or product? Chances are, the answer is yes. According to Goldman Sachs, the booming influencer industry is projected to reach \$480 billion by 2027, all while reshaping consumer habits and how the fashion world operates.





DIXIE D'AMELIO AND GSTAAD GUY AT BURBERRY'S THE LOLA BAG PARTY

PHOTO BY DAVID X PRUTTING/BFA



ISABELLA MASSENET, STELLA MCCARTNEY, AND LILLY SISTO AT THE 15TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF STELLA MCCARTNEY'S FALABELLA BAG

PHOTO BY MATTEO PRANDONI/BFA



JENNY WALTON AND LEANDRA MEDINE COHEN AT THE KHAITE SPRING/SUMMER 2023 RUNWAY SHOW

PHOTO BY ROMMEL DEMANO/BFA

Another rising class of influencer is the "commerce creator"—relatable yet aspirational tastemakers who attract loyal audiences for their recommendations.

Brands have been collaborating with influencers for around two decades—and with celebrities even longer—but it's not a case of one-size-fits-all when it comes to the right ambassador. Audiences have become accustomed to macro-influencers (recognizable tastemakers who boast a larger number of followers than the population of a small country) and micro-influencers (individuals more likely to have a niche audience with strong engagement). But as consumers become more scrupulous about paid partnerships and gifting, two new classes of influencers are rising to the fore.

Enter the "anti-influencer"—a creator who started out critiquing the luxury industry but, ironically, now also benefits from sponsorship deals. Trailblazing comedian @GstaadGuy, who keeps his real name secret, helped popularize the concept with his satirical videos that garnered unprecedented interaction. Now, he's working alongside Loro Piana and Audemars Piguet on projects and is launching two brands of his own.

Julianne Elise Beffa, founder of Julianne Elise Public Relations (JEPR) has an explanation for this appeal. "As more influencers emerged, brand deals became commonplace, and the public's opinion shifted," Beffa says. "Anti-influencers cater to consumers who don't engage with traditional influencers, giving them a chance to form their own community."

In the same vein, Beffa notes the rise in more subtle campaigns, where a partnership is integrated authentically into content as opposed to looking like a typical advertisement. It's not unusual these days to see the likes of online comedian Amanda McCants, or macro-influencer Alix Earle include discrete or seemingly unrelated product mentions in uploads, and their fans have come to expect it, too. "If a brand wants to 'humanize' itself beyond aspirational content or reach a wider audience, then this approach

can be effective," Beffa says. "I encourage influencers to create normal, everyday content, incorporate the product, and 'bury' the campaign in the caption. Brands should want partnerships to seem organic. Share key messaging, but let the influencer have creative control. They know their audience and what performs best."

Another rising class of influencer is the "commerce creator"—relatable yet aspirational tastemakers who attract loyal audiences for their recommendations. Among the newsletter platforms, Substack's most popular commerce creators are Becky Malinksy, Laura Reilly, Leandra Medine Cohen, Harling Ross Anton, and Lilly Sisto. By integrating affiliate links, they receive commissions on readers' purchases, while they also work with brands such as Prada, Everlane, Massimo Dutti, and Vestiaire Collective as both consultants and influencers to curate edits or host social media takeovers and events.

Sophie Krakoff, a founder of the influencer agency Friends of the House Group, who represents in-demand fashion insiders like Sisto, says "Brands are looking to partner with creators who have real connections to their audience, and who can drive meaningful sales. Blogs and newsletters are genuine ways for commerce creators to get creative [because] it feels like they're having a chat with friends away from vanity metrics, such as likes."

Above all, brands should ask questions to identify "unicorn" ambassadors. "Seek out partners that organically support the brand and share similar values," Beffa advises. "Nurture relationships with creators by inviting them to events, meeting them in person, and asking them for product feedback." It all comes down to listening, Krakoff echoes, noting that internal teams identifying prospective partners should be diverse, innovative, and clued-in.



UNBOXING THE BOX

MONICA AWE-ETUK
BY UMI ABDUL-MATEEN
PHOTO COURTESY OF MONICA AWE-ETUK

UNBOXING
VIDEOS ARE NOW
A CORNERSTONE
OF LUXURY
BRANDS' DIGITAL
STRATEGIES.

BY LAUREN FINNEY
HARDEN

▶ In 2021, viewers watched unboxing videos more than 1.1 billion times and spent over 60 million hours watching content. As video content becomes an everyday experience, unboxing videos are becoming key for luxury brands to find and delight new customers.

According to a 2023 study at the School of Business Management, NMIMS Mumbai, unboxings have a concrete influence on consumer behavior. Researchers found that parasocial interaction—the psychological relationship in which viewers feel they personally know mass media performers—does directly influence purchase intent. The more aligned or ingrained viewers are with an influencer, the more likely they are to trust a recommendation.

McKenna Sweazey, a global luxury marketer and member of the Metaverse Fashion Council, says that unboxing is an integral part of a luxury brand's strategy today, despite it seemingly going against the opaqueness they maintained in the past.

"Luxury brands like control. The best influencer marketing means letting go of control, but unboxing lets them take back some control, as the brand experience begins with the box," she explains. "Luxury brands are selling quality and exclusivity in tandem, and unboxings allow viewers to look at the glossiness of the leather, the weight of the handbag, the shimmer of the bracelet. It's purely focused on the product."

Sweazey sees this as a smart move, especially with items that don't necessarily need to be tried on, such as jewelry, bags, and shoes. Unboxing videos help underscore the item's value and, in turn, become an important part of a brand's strategy when it comes to customer acquisition. "These high-margin items drive the bulk of a luxury retailer's revenue," she says.

For Monica Awe-Etuk, a fashion influencer with hundreds of thousands of followers across several platforms, the appeal of unboxing videos comes down to emotion.

"There's a joint feeling that 'we' got something new, even though you might not be the one using it," she says. "It's a mix of people cheering you on, being nosy, and wanting to know what the next big thing is."



**WOMEN'S GUCCI
HORSEBIT
PLATFORM LOAFER**
PHOTO COURTESY OF
MONICA AWE-ETUK

Unboxing videos help underscore the item's value and, in turn, become an important part of a brand's strategy when it comes to customer acquisition.

Consumers are ready to take different influencers' guidance and watch them unbox millions of items.



MONICA AWE-ETUK
AT THE PH5 NEW
YORK FASHION WEEK
2023 PRESENTATION
PHOTO BY ROY ROCHLIN/
GETTY IMAGES



XENIA ADONTS
OUTSIDE OF MIU
MIU'S WOMENSWEAR
FALL/WINTER 2024-
2025 SHOW
PHOTO BY KIRSTIN
SINCLAIR/GETTY IMAGES



MONICA AWE-ETUK
PHOTO COURTESY OF
MONICA AWE-ETUK

**XENIA ADONTS OUTSIDE
THE GUCCI CRUISE SHOW
2025 AT TATE MODERN**
PHOTO BY KIRSTIN
SINCLAIR/GETTY IMAGES



Her YouTube channel is where she sees the most unboxing traction, especially for bags. However, the viewers' appetites have shifted, emphasizing the need for creators and brands to be platform-specific and continue to evolve strategies.

"In 2021 and 2022, there was a ton of money flowing, and people wanted unboxings from me on YouTube," Awe-Etuk states. "I saw a decline on that channel in 2023. I keep unboxing videos on TikTok, where they still want to see what's in the box."

In recent years, she's seen luxury brands get even more selective about influencer marketing. It becomes more about honing in on those who can convert viewers into spenders rather than those who just offer up aspirational photos and videos to spread awareness.

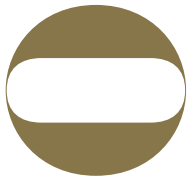
"The evolution [of luxury marketing] lies in focusing on attracting younger customers with high potential and enhancing the wallet share of existing shoppers," says Dana Telsey, the CEO and chief research officer of Telsey Advisory Group, a consumer-focused brokerage and banking firm. Brands must balance trying new things and keeping auras of exclusivity, especially as Gen Z and Gen Alpha consumers, raised on YouTube unboxing videos, come into the picture. According to a Bloomberg report, Gen Z and Gen Alpha's luxury spending is expected to grow three times faster than previous generations, so unboxing videos remain a viable and lucrative way to connect with consumers. Sweazey says that brands need to continue to evolve and expand their thinking around what an unboxing means in a purely digital landscape.

"Luxury brands have already moved towards environments such as Balenciaga's digital runway show. There are fashion designers in Roblox and luxury items for sale, such as a digital Gucci bag," she explains. By entering the digital space, Sweazey says brands might be able to create even more buzz without having to send out physical products. "Digitally, brands can completely remove the utility of a bag while keeping aesthetics, status, and an exclusive price point. Designers can be more creative and take more risks. The digital universe is the next big opportunity." And consumers are ready to take different influencers' guidance and watch them unbox millions of items.



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