

# WWWD

Fashion. Beauty. Business.

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Tommy Hilfiger has joined Cadillac Formula 1 Team as an apparel partner.

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## Bealls' 110 Years

CEO Matt Beall on why today, "off-pricers rule the world."

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# Star Bright

Chanel traveled to Kyoto, Japan, to present its latest high jewelry collection, pieces from which are seen here, and the inspiration for the late jewelry studio director Patrice Leguèreau was a blend of that location's iconic crafts with Gabrielle Chanel's time spent in Hollywood in the late '20s and early '30s. The result lived up to the collection's name: "Reach for the Stars." *For more, see pages 6 and 7.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY MOMO ANGELA

## BUSINESS

# Saks Eyes Bergdorf Goodman Expansion

● Saks is said to be exploring joint venture opportunities to expand Bergdorf amid its broader luxury reset.

BY EVAN CLARK

**The reinvention at Saks Global** might be about to touch the Bergdorf Goodman business.

Sources said the company has had “preliminary discussions about potential joint venture opportunities” for the uber luxe retailer.

Exactly what kind of deal those discussions could lead to remains uncertain, but there would certainly be any number of players that could be interested in at least thinking more about partnering up with Bergdorf’s.

Financial sources have been buzzing that Saks was shopping Bergdorf’s to Middle Eastern funds interested in trophy retail properties, looking to quickly raise roughly \$1 billion to shore up its liquidity. “Phone calls have been made, it’s in play,” one source said.

But Saks said not so fast and threw cold water on the speculation.

Marc Metrick, chief executive officer of Saks, told WWD: “We’re not selling the business. It’s core to our strategy – it’s the

data, it’s the brand positioning, it’s part of our story. It’s not something we would do.”

Metrick is in the process of “resetting” luxury multibrand retailing in the U.S., integrating Neiman’s into Saks, setting up a storefront on Amazon, extending payment terms on vendors and more.

Along the way there have been partners of all kinds. Amazon, Salesforce and G-III Apparel Group all contributed to the Neiman’s deal.

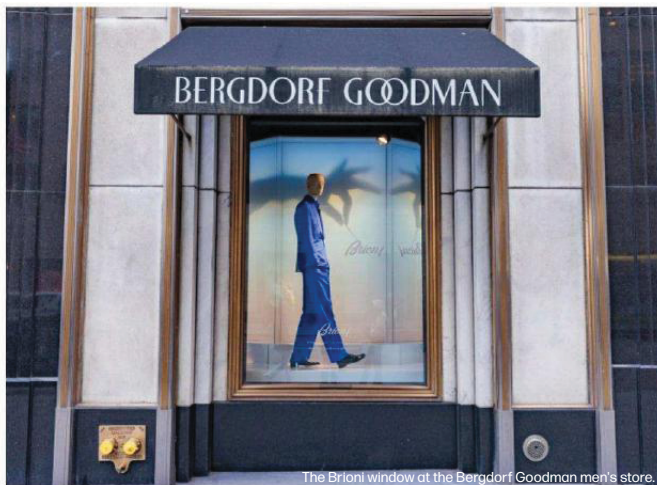
Saks also linked with Jamie Salter’s licensing giant Authentic Brands Group to form Authentic Luxury Group. Initially, that joint venture included Authentic’s Barneys New York, Judith Leiber Couture, Hervé Léger and Vince brands, which could get more exposure in Saks properties. The group is also expected to keep an eye out for other designer brands that could play a similar role.

Authentic Luxury Group is also said to be working with Centric Brands to put Saks Fifth Avenue-branded men’s in Costco.

Partnering is the name of the game at the moment and Bergdorf’s is jumping in.

For now, Metrick has some financial breathing room to push his reset.

Last week Saks lined up a \$300 million FILO credit facility as well as a \$50 million secured term loan, both of which are expected to close by June 30 and are from



The Brioni window at the Bergdorf Goodman men’s store.

SLR Credit Solutions.

That sets the company up to have \$700 million in liquidity by the end of the month – enough to fund \$240 million in bond interest payments this year, the \$275 million in past-due bills owed to vendors and other expenses.

“Saks is in it and we’re going to do something great,” Metrick said after securing the financing. “The most important thing to me is reestablishing the credibility that we have with our partners and [realizing] synergies [between Neiman’s and Saks] well ahead of plan.”

## BUSINESS

# Zadig & Voltaire Founders Acquire Maison Poiray, Aurélie Bidermann



The Poiray flagship on Rue de la Paix near Place Vendôme in Paris.



Arnaud and Thierry Gillier

● Arnaud and Thierry Gillier will revamp the Poiray brand with an eye to a younger customer with aspirational positioning.

BY RHONDA RICHFORD

**PARIS** – Thierry and Arnaud Gillier, cofounders of fashion label Zadig & Voltaire, have acquired storied French jewelry and watch house Maison Poiray, as well as fine and costume jewelry brand Aurélie Bidermann.

The acquisitions were made through their holding company, Iéna Investissements, and mark a strategic expansion of the brothers’ footprint in the accessible luxury space beyond fashion.

The brands were part of a package deal, purchased from Jean Paul Bize’s private equity firm AMS Group. Financial terms

were not disclosed.

AMS Group took a majority stake in the Bidermann brand in 2016 and Bidermann herself stepped into the creative director role of Poiray at that time. She departed the house in 2018, which has been operating without a design head since then.

The flagship boutique on Paris’ Rue de la Paix is slated for a revamp and expansion as one of the first priorities post-acquisition and international expansion is in the cards longer term. The Gilliers will also embark on a search for a new creative director in due time.

“We just closed last week, so we need a short time to have reflection and to develop a real strategy,” Thierry Gillier told WWD. “This is a long-term project to build the house.”

He emphasized Poiray’s heritage. “The opportunity came to the table and we

thought about [the house’s] story, and wanted to come into that story,” he said. “It’s an old house and the idea to ‘re-pimp’ the house was very, very interesting.”

Founded in 1975 by François Héral and Michel Ermelin, Poiray was named as a tribute to French couturier Paul Poiret. The brand is known for its signature interlaced heart motif and its Ma Première watch with interchangeable bracelets, as well as interchangeable stones on rings and other key pieces.

The Gilliers see opportunity to revitalize the brand by targeting a younger audience with an edgier, accessible luxury approach.

“This brand could be rock ‘n’ roll too,” said Gillier, drawing parallels with Zadig & Voltaire’s positioning. “It’s a strong brand that is already working well. It is profitable, but we just have to, maybe, add some rock ‘n’ roll into that and renew [it].”

He acknowledged that Poiray’s current clientele skews older, and a key goal is to revamp the brand’s appeal while preserving its heritage. “Luxury is in the midst of a big reshuffle,” said Gillier, and Poiray is uniquely positioned to appeal to aspirational younger customers who value storytelling.

In 1986, Nathalie Hocq, daughter of former Cartier chairman Robert Hocq, who also served as Cartier president of general development and design lead, joined Poiray. “As a result of her early work with the house, [Poiray and Cartier] share some of the same DNA,” Gillier said.

Positioning in an accessible luxury space

will be key to the new owners’ strategy.

For example, a small gold interlaced heart pendant retails for 850 euros, while a large rose gold and diamond version is priced at 13,190 euros. Watches range from 1,500 euros to more than 11,000 euros, with an average price point around 5,000 euros.

The brand’s fundamentals are strong, with growth of 20 percent year-over-year, the team said.

“We are not running after expanding [immediately],” Gillier said. “We are concentrating on organization, high quality, and design” as first priorities.

Poiray currently operates four standalone stores in Paris and has corners in key department stores Le Bon Marché, Printemps and Samaritaine Paris, in addition to being sold in multibrand jewelry boutiques throughout France.

Both Maison Poiray and Aurélie Bidermann will operate independently from ZV Holding, which oversees Zadig & Voltaire and cashmere label Pellat-Finet.

Thierry Gillier will continue to serve as artistic director of Zadig & Voltaire. Sales of that brand are projected to hit 450 million euros in 2025. Including fragrance revenue through a licensing deal with Shiseido, total brand sales are expected to reach about 700 million euros, the duo said.

“The fragrance is really performing,” Gillier said, emphasizing that Zadig & Voltaire has morphed into a lifestyle brand and will continue to expand in other categories.

In 2021, Zadig & Voltaire stated its ambition to grow its footprint in China to 60 stores by 2025, but has now shuttered all stores there. After buying out its former partner in the country in 2020, the Gilliers are now seeking a new partner and anticipate a deal by the end of 2025.

Elsewhere, growth in South America has been “a great success” in recent quarters, Gillier said. Zadig & Voltaire currently operates around 400 stores worldwide.

Outside of fashion and jewelry, the Gilliers also operate Parisian boutique hotel Château Voltaire through a separate hospitality company.

## BUSINESS

# Signet Shares Soar as Q1 Sales Gain

● CEO J.K. Symancyk says the jeweler's turnaround strategy giving outsized focus to the Kay, Jared and Zales divisions is gaining traction.

BY DAVID MOIN

**Signet Jewelers**, reporting sales gains for the first quarter and displaying confidence in its transformation efforts, saw its share price spike 12.5 percent on Tuesday.

Net income was \$33.5 million, or 78 cents per diluted share for the quarter ended May 3, when results were pulled down by tax changes and restructuring charges totaling 46 cents per share. A year ago, earnings stood at \$52.1 million, or 90 cents.

Adjusted operating income, which the company considers a clearer indication of its financial performance, increased to \$70.3 million from \$57.8 million.

Sales rose 2 percent to \$1.54 billion from \$1.51 billion, while comparable-store sales increased 2.5 percent. The average unit retail price increased approximately 8 percent.

The results, as well as a slightly elevated outlook on sales for 2025, pushed shares up \$8.32 to \$75.13 on Tuesday.

"We really saw balanced growth across all categories," chief executive officer J.K. Symancyk told WWD.

He attributed much of the sales gain to bridal jewelry, which has continued to show growth since the fourth quarter, and fashion jewelry, where there has been "early wins" in jewelry priced between \$250 to \$500, a range that Signet in the past did not emphasize enough.

During the interview, the CEO characterized the consumer as "resilient and smart....They are making choices, but if the design and value proposition are right, and you are connecting in the

right emotional ways as a brand, we see the consumer willing to invest and spend. But we certainly recognize it's a dynamic environment. We don't take that for granted."

Symancyk also gave WWD a progress report on Signet's "Grow Brand Love" transformation strategy, which was completed in the first quarter and involved some reduction in staff size and the elimination of some layers of management.

The headcount reduction was not disclosed because, as Symancyk said: "It wasn't big enough. It was more about being more efficient and effective and really aligning our structure behind the strategy."

He also said the reorganization enables management to "speed the clock on how we make decisions, particularly when you speak about being relevant in trend and fashion," and brings the teams across the Signet portfolio of brands closer to the consumer.

As part of the transformation, Symancyk said he sees fewer than 200 stores across the entire Signet portfolio closing this year.

Another aspect of the strategy calls for the company to be innovative "in three ways," Symancyk said.

- Developing more design-led assortments that are on-trend and convey greater newness.
- "Dimensionalizing the customer experience" across the brands and no longer taking a standardized approach to store operations.
- Elevating the marketing. "You will see different personalities for each brand," said Symancyk, adding that the company's marketing spend grew by 2 percent last quarter, helping drive impressions up 30 percent.

Overall, the strategic plan is intended to accelerate growth in several ways after the company experienced a difficult

2024. Also on the agenda: expansion into new categories such as gifts, building brand loyalty and creating compelling experiences for customers including new store designs. Among the best-performing collections last quarter were Unspoken at Jared, and the Stellar Allure and Whimley collections at Zales.

In his prepared statement, Symancyk said: "While we're in the early innings of Grow Brand Love, our strategy is already driving growth in both bridal and fashion."

"We delivered positive same-store sales growth each month of the quarter, and into May, by bolstering our offerings at key price points and continuing the evolution of our assortment. Our three largest brands – Kay, Zales and Jared – all saw sequential comp sales improvement from the fourth quarter on higher margins, highlighting the impact of our outsized focus on our larger brands." Signet also operates Banter by Piercing Pagoda, Diamonds Direct, Blue Nile, JamesAllen.com, Rocksbox, Peoples Jewellers, H. Samuel and Ernest Jones.

Joan Hilson, chief operating and financial officer, said in her prepared statement:

"Our renewed promotional strategy and inventory management delivered both gross merchandise margin and adjusted operating margin expansion in the quarter with sales improvement outpacing inventory growth. Given our positive performance, we are increasing the low end and maintaining the high end of our fiscal 2026 operating guidance. This outlook reflects the current macro environment and current tariffs as well as on track cost savings initiatives. Further, we are raising our adjusted EPS guidance to reflect the repurchase of more than 5 percent of outstanding shares year to date."

Signet brought up the bottom-end of its



Zales is part of the Signet Jewelers portfolio.

guidance for 2025 and is now forecasting \$6.57 billion to \$6.8 billion in sales, from its previous projection of \$6.53 billion to \$6.8 billion in sales. Same-store sales are now seen ranging from down 2 percent to up 1.5 percent, versus the previous guidance of down 2.5 percent to up 1.5 percent.

Adjusted operating income is seen ranging from \$430 million to \$510 million, versus the earlier projection of from \$420 million to \$510 million.

The total sales outlook anticipates a "measured consumer environment, providing for variability in consumer spending over the year," the company said. Signet also indicated that it expects to absorb current tariffs within the adjusted operating income range provided, and that the forecast excludes any potential impact resulting from any new tariffs and the potential outcome of reciprocal tariffs.

In other first-quarter results, gross margin was \$598.8 million, up approximately \$26 million from the first quarter last year. Gross margin rate grew 100 basis points to 38.8 percent, driven by gross merchandise margin expansion and leverage on fixed costs.

SG&A was \$526 million, or 34.1 percent of sales, up from \$515.4 million, and flat to the year-ago first quarter, as a percentage of sales.

## BUSINESS

# Madhappy's Retail Journey Lands in Manhattan's NoLiTa

● The eight-year-old Los Angeles-based brand now has two flagships and more in the pipeline.

BY DAVID MOIN

**Madhappy**, the contemporary brand known for its logo hoodies, tie-dyed T-shirts, collaborations and community spirit, has arrived in Manhattan's NoLiTa neighborhood.

On Saturday, Madhappy opens a two-level, 1,800-square-foot flagship, at 207 Mulberry Street, a sign of the brand's growing interest in operating permanent stores versus what's been several years of primarily operating temporary units considered long-term pop-ups.

Since Madhappy launched eight years ago, "We've done our fair share of seasonal stores – 20 or so pop-ups," said Madhappy's cofounder Noah Raf, in an interview. They've surfaced in Williamsburg and SoHo, New York; Miami, Aspen, Chicago and other locations.

But going forward, Raf said: "We've got about eight permanent stores in the pipeline. The next two will be in Tokyo this winter and Malibu, California in the spring of 2026."

He characterized the NoLiTa store as a "flagship" based on Madhappy's "robust" investment in creating the store, events and activities that will take place there, and its café.

Madhappy's only other flagship is on Melrose Avenue and Robinson Street in West Hollywood, Los Angeles. "In West Hollywood, we've been seeing 15,000 people per month. The café is contributing a large portion of the foot traffic," Raf said.

Asked what percentage of the guests comes for the café versus the merchandise, Raf said: "It's hard to monitor exactly the split, but I would estimate about 60 percent for the café. We have a lot of daily customers," for the coffee, though many of them end up browsing the merchandise, too. "We're hoping for a similar reaction in NoLiTa."

Madhappy also has a store in East Hampton, N.Y., that's not considered a

flagship because there's no café and there is just a three-year lease, though Raf said he intends to renew it or seek another spot in the town.

Raf feels that NoLiTa, with its mix of retail and food and beverage establishments is a good fit for Madhappy and its fashion boutique/café concept. He also said the Madhappy pop-up in SoHo, which is right next to NoLiTa, was successful.

Besides the café, which occupies about a quarter of the space, the shop is distinguished by its 50 feet of frontage and big, wide windows. "We like people to be able to see through to the inside of the space as they walk by outside," said Raf. "We don't do any traditional window display."

T-shirts and hoodies are what Madhappy sells mostly, and mostly to 18- to 25-year-old women. That demographic represents about 70 percent of Madhappy's customer base.

"Anything in jersey and fleece is the core business," Raf said.

Garment-dyed T-shirts, unique washes, knitwear, outerwear and footwear from third parties round out the collection. The majority of the product in made in Los Angeles. The assortment range "has definitely grown year-over-year," said Raf.

The NoLiTa store was designed in conjunction with the L.A.-based creative studio PlayLab Inc., building upon the visual language of the L.A. store with its signature blue dyed concrete, brushed aluminum, ceramic tile and douglas fir.

The café, called the Pantry, has a menu with offerings from local and international culinary partners, including Hotel Drugs, a café from Japan providing espresso and tea; Sofreh, a Brooklyn-based restaurant/

café from chef Nasim Alikhani providing Persian baked goods and pastries, and Tom's Juice, the New York-based cold-pressed juice company from New Zealander Tom Wright.

Just for the opening, Madhappy has created a limited-edition line of merchandise themed around New York institutions such as the New York Yankees and the New York Mets, and Lucali Pizza.

Collaborating is a big part of the brand DNA. In May, Madhappy teamed up with Gigi Hadid's Guest in Residence on a limited collection of women's apparel. And last summer, the Gap collaborated with Madhappy on a limited-edition collection of women's, men's and kids' apparel that took inspiration from the Gap archive.

Collabs and merchandise aside, "What makes the brand distinctive is the ethos," Raf said. "We are communicating a very positive message in trying to raise awareness about mental health. One of our partners in the business, Mason Spector did have personal struggles growing up. He inspired us to take this journey and champion mental health awareness."

Madhappy hosts events each month, typically centered on panel discussions tackling mental health topics, with psychologists, artists, or others from different fields. Madhappy also has a magazine called "Local Optimist" highlighting people and their stories, with a focus on mental health, wellness and art, as well as a foundation raising funds for research and organizations involved in mental health issues.

"We are trying to show young women it's OK to talk about these things which are difficult to talk about," Raf said.



The facade of the new Madhappy store.



Tommy Hilfiger has a long history of sponsoring Formula 1 racing.



Tommy Hilfiger



An archival shot of Team Lotus.

BUSINESS

# Tommy Hilfiger Joins Cadillac Formula 1 Team As Official Apparel Partner

● The partnership includes team kits featuring the brand's signature design and iconology, with the Tommy Hilfiger logo displayed on the car, driver suits and helmets, as well as fan merchandise.

BY LISA LOCKWOOD

Tommy Hilfiger and Cadillac Formula 1 Team have forged a multiyear partnership setting the fashion brand up as the team's official apparel partner.

The Hilfiger brand, which is part of PVH Corp., is bringing its spirit of "fashiontainment" to F1 at a time when the sport's popularity is at an all-time high. Cadillac Formula 1 Team is the first new addition since 2016, and the team intends to join the Formula 1 grid in 2026.

"Two icons. One vision. A bold new era of American motorsport," said Tommy Hilfiger. "We're proud to continue our Formula 1 story alongside TWG Motorsports and Cadillac. We share a vision to honor the heritage of F1 while pushing it forward — celebrating where we come from and reimagining where we can go. As the sport's presence around the globe continues to soar, there's never been a better time to dream big and show the world what an American team can bring to the grid."

In an interview Tuesday, Hilfiger said he's been fascinated by racing his entire life, having grown up near Watkins Glen's F1 racetrack. "My friends and I would peer over the fences, and I would watch the races. I became obsessed with it. It was such an event, it was like a rock concert," said Hilfiger. He said bands would be

playing and they'd tailgate, "It was wild."

Over the years, Hilfiger's company has sponsored Team Lotus, Ferrari and Mercedes-AMG, and collaborated with Lewis Hamilton. Hilfiger's Mercedes Benz contract was expiring, and they decided to sponsor the Cadillac Formula 1 Team, an American team. "I thought it would be great to partner with them," said Hilfiger.

In March, the Cadillac F1 Team received final approval to join the pinnacle of motorsport. Formed by TWG Motorsports and General Motors, the team brings together a legacy of engineering excellence and a shared commitment to innovation and performance.

"We are an American team representing one of the most iconic American brands of all time," said Cadillac Formula 1 Team Principal Graeme Lowdon. "Tommy Hilfiger, too, is an American icon, and the brand's legacy in Formula 1 is unmatched. As we bring a bold new vision to the paddock, this partnership truly reflects the spirit of what we're building. Together, we're not only racing, but driving innovation that will shape the future of both entertainment and engineering."

Lea Rytz Goldman, global brand president of Tommy Hilfiger, added: "From the very beginning, entertainment and sport have been a part of our brand's heritage. By doubling down in motorsport, we are excited to present a fresh expression of what's possible when fashion evolves at the speed of pop culture. This partnership continues our legacy of breaking boundaries, bringing style to the grid, and driving the future of Formula 1."

Hilfiger brings over three decades of experience in the sport, having written the playbook on how fashion shows up on the grid.

The partnership includes team kits featuring the brand's signature design and iconology, with the Tommy Hilfiger logo displayed on the car, driver suits and helmets. A fanwear collection will also launch.

"Tommy Hilfiger is an American original, and we're proud to welcome them as our first official partner," said Dan Towriss, chief executive officer of Cadillac Formula 1 Team. "This collaboration represents the fusion of two bold, innovative brands — where performance meets iconic style. As we build a team that reflects American ambition on the global 1 stage, this partnership sets the tone for what's ahead."

Hilfiger said his company will be making team kits for the drivers, crews and management. The fanwear collection will fuse Hilfiger's "Prep Made Modern" aesthetic with the performance-driven codes of Cadillac Formula 1. While the initial launch is menswear, the company is sponsoring F1 Academy for women, and they will eventually add Cadillac merchandise for women, he said.

Asked if he's ever owned a Cadillac, Hilfiger said he had a Cadillac Escalade for awhile. "It's the most luxurious American car, and is built very well," he said. Hilfiger said he's especially excited because the teams he's sponsored in the past were all European, and this is the first American brand he's sponsored for racing.

He noted that the company has a team that designs the F1 apparel as part of the master design team.

Hilfiger loves the affiliation with Formula One racing. "It's more than a sport, it's a cultural force," he said, attributing part of the consumer interest to Netflix's "Drive to Survive" series, which he said lifted interest and put it onto another level.

"The young drivers are like rock stars. They're very cool and they're in great shape," he said. They come out before the race in cool fashion and then change to their uniforms. He attributed a lot of the hype to Hamilton and George Russell, who wore Tommy Hilfiger when they raced for Mercedes. "They were the leaders of it," he said.

Hilfiger added that the races in Miami, Austin and Las Vegas "are completely sold out."

The Cadillac Formula 1 Team hasn't revealed its drivers yet, which will happen in August. "They're going after some real stars," Hilfiger said. In addition, the Cadillac racing car will be unveiled over the next couple of months. Each of the 11 teams has two cars.

"You'll see a lot of red, blue and white flags being very present at the races," added Hilfiger.

Last month at Formula 1 in Miami, TWG Motorsports x Cadillac F1 marked the official global launch of the Cadillac Formula 1 Team held inside a reimagined 1940s-style theater in South Beach. The venue, Queen, was transformed into Cadillac Club, where guests included Victoria Monet, Mickalene Thomas, Terry Crews, Jurnee Smollett, Sophia Bush and Camila Coelho. Janelle Monáe performed, followed by an electric DJ set from the Grammy-nominated artist.

Hilfiger is launching the APXGP Collection ahead of the premiere of "F1 the Movie" in North America on June 27, and internationally beginning June 25. That collection features moto-emblazoned mechanic shirts, a varsity-meets-moto jacket in vegan leather, tailored Japanese denim jeans and a merino knit polo. A red quilted jacket modeled after the exact silhouette worn by Damson Idris' character in the film is prominent in the lineup. Retail prices range from \$50 to \$790. The Hilfiger brand logo is prominently displayed on the APXGP car, driver's kit and team uniforms.

Several capsule collections for the Cadillac Formula 1 Team will come out in spring 2026, around the time of the first race, said Hilfiger.

## BEAUTY

## Mary Phillips Said to Be Launching Makeup Brand

Justine Marjan, Mary Phillips and Jen Atkin.



- Sources tell WWD that the celebrity makeup artist is getting into the product game.

BY JAMES MANSO

**Artistry-led makeup brands** are getting a new entrant, WWD has learned.

Mary Phillips is said to be the next makeup artist getting into the product game with a range of her own, sources said. The brand's name, debut product offerings and launch timing could not

be learned, though it is rumored to be launching at Sephora. Phillips is also said to have a team in place, having tapped Roshini Greenwald as its president.

According to Greenwald's LinkedIn profile, she spent years at Macy's and L'Oréal, and is currently at a "confidential beauty brand launching Fall '25," which would put products on shelf before the all-important holiday season.

Phillips declined to comment. Sephora did not respond to request for comment by press time.

Phillips, who also recently launched talent management agency Highlight Artists with Jen Atkin and Justine Marjan, boasts over 2.2 million followers on Instagram alone – on par with her roster of clients that has included the Kardashian-Jenner family, Chrissy Teigen, Hailee Steinfeld and Hailey Bieber, among others.

Social-savvy makeup artists to A-Listers have had much fanfare, and much success, with product offerings of their own. Mario Dedivanovic, founder and chief executive officer of Makeup by Mario, rose to fame as the architect behind Kim Kardashian's contour. His brand, also sold at Sephora, had projected revenues of \$150 million to \$200 million when it hired J.P. Morgan to explore deal options.

Patrick Ta also falls into that cohort, with just shy of 4 million followers and his own namesake brand, Patrick Ta Beauty, also at Sephora. Ta's clientele has included Salma Hayek and Halle Berry, and he's parlayed his viral blushes into a full-fledged range of stock keeping units. In 2022, his brand was expected to hit \$30 million, as reported; in 2023, sales were said to have almost tripled.

Though Sephora has won in the category, makeup – the largest piece of the U.S. prestige beauty market – has faced headwinds. Makeup declined 1 percent in the first quarter in dollar sales, per Circana data, with key categories like face and eye facing headwinds. Lip color remained flat, while smaller segments such as lip oils, balms, and stick formats of eye shadow and foundation grew.



## BEAUTY

## Sephora, NielsenIQ Partner on Consumer Data

- The collaboration will leverage NIQ's expanded data to better understand shifts in consumer buying behavior across both online and offline channels.

BY KATHRYN HOPKINS

**Sephora and consumer intelligence** firm NielsenIQ are joining forces amid a competitive beauty retail landscape.

They have unveiled a strategic collaboration to provide a more comprehensive view of the beauty landscape in North America, which will in turn help inform some of the beauty retailer's decisions.

According to a statement Tuesday, the collaboration will leverage NIQ's expanded omnishopper and digital purchases solution capabilities to better understand shifts in consumer buying behavior across both online and offline channels.

"At Sephora, our beauty community is the heart of our business, and we are constantly seeking out forward-thinking partners to help us better serve our clients throughout their shopping journey with us," said Ryan Oto, vice president, business intelligence and analytics at Sephora. "This partnership with NielsenIQ is a strategic leap forward in how we listen to our beauty consumers, elevate insights across every touchpoint and deliver on the future of beauty retail."

The announcement comes as Amazon's ongoing push into prestige beauty continues to ramp up pressure on beauty retailers, including Sephora, Ulta, department stores and more.

During an earnings call in April, Cécile Cabanis, chief financial officer of Sephora parent LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, said of the beauty retailer: "In the U.S., we have a bit less momentum when it comes to e-commerce, especially because Amazon is being very aggressive, and being aggressive is mostly regarding price. And we try to avoid this technique."

Ulta Beauty executives said they had never seen such a competitive beauty environment, resulting in it losing market share for the first time in 2024.

NielsenIQ's expanded Omnishopper, launched in January 2025, includes a 250,000-strong consumer panel. Through the combined Omnishopper and Digital Purchases lens, Sephora will gain insights into in-store and online shopping trends and preferences across NIQ's comprehensive coverage of mass drug, specialty, e-commerce and social channels, the statement said.

"This data sharing partnership unlocks access to a new level of insight into the prestige beauty space, including expansive point-of-sale coverage of Sephora's omnichannel business, increasing NielsenIQ's total coverage of beauty," added Jacqueline Flann, senior vice president of beauty, drug & OTC retail for NielsenIQ.

## BEAUTY

## What Happens When a Playwright's Perfume Addiction Goes Too Far?

- Starring Tim Heidecker and Julia Fox, Charlotte Ercoli's first comedy feature film, "Fior di Latte," which debuts at Tribeca Film Festival, aims to find out.

BY NOOR LOBAD

**Charlotte Ercoli's newest film** opens with a scene that will likely feel familiar: a messy apartment and a suitcase that remains unpacked long after its owner, a New York City-based playwright named Mark Van Bloom, has returned from a vacation to Italy.

His next move – grabbing a pair of boxers from said suitcase and huffing them – may feel less familiar, though it's far from the last time Van Bloom, played by Tim Heidecker, will repeat this sequence in what turn into increasingly desperate attempts to replicate the euphoria of his time in Florence. That euphoria, he discovers, is evoked by the scent of an Italian perfume that broke and spilled in his suitcase on the return journey to New York.

Like Ercoli's film itself, debuting at the 2025 Tribeca Film Festival, the perfume is called "Fior di Latte." Van Bloom becomes convinced that smelling it is the key to unlocking his creative juices as he races to meet a fast-approaching deadline. As his distress grows, he adds more antics to the equation: while sniffing, he plays Italian music in the background; enlists an aspiring actress he meets on a New York street corner, played by Julia Fox, to sweet-talk him in an Italian accent, and chomps down on his favorite Italian

sweet bread, pandoro.

"The movie is an analogy for addiction," said Ercoli, who infused nods to her own experiences and upbringing as an Italian-American New Yorker in the film. Ercoli's aunt and mother – Robin Coe-Hutshing and Jennifer Coe-Bakewell, respectively – were the founders of Studio BeautyMix at Fred Segal and bespoke fragrance brand, Memoire Liquide, which operated counters at Fred Segal and Henri Bendel.

"Growing up, I would just smell perfume all day long," said Ercoli, who went on to create commercials for fragrance brand D.S. & Durga and initially pitched "Fior di Latte" to the company as a short film. "They politely turned it down, and rightfully so, because it was just too big of an idea for a perfume ad; they encouraged me to develop it into a feature film."

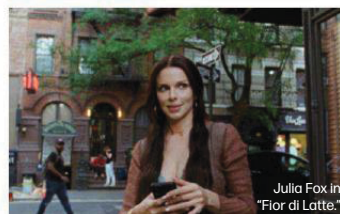
The protagonist's vacation takes inspiration from Ercoli's own first solo trip to Italy at 14 years old. "Getting shipped off to Italy by myself, with 20 Italian cousins taking me to the disco; drinking, kissing boys, doing everything under the sun – it was the most life-changing experience I've ever had, and I wanted to write a movie about a guy who similarly has an experience that is just so incredible in another country that, when he comes back to his city where he feels isolated, he's addicted to huffing the smell of his clothes."

The film stars Marta Pozzan as Van Bloom's Italian love interest, and includes a cast of seasoned and first-time actors, including friends of Ercoli. "I love

to blend the two; there's a great alchemy to the way they feed off of each other."

In tandem with the film, Italian fragrance brand I Profumi di Firenze is launching a limited-edition Fior di Latte perfume on June 10 at C.O. Bigelow and Onda Beauty in New York. Retailing for \$150 for a 50-ml. bottle, the fragrance is infused with notes of vanilla, orris root and honeysuckle.

As for what Ercoli is most looking forward to while debuting the film? "Standing in the wing of the theater and hear when people laugh," she said.



ACCESSORIES

# Chanel's Latest High Jewelry Collection Takes Flight in Kyoto



"Five Wings" brooches.



"Rise and Shine" brooch.



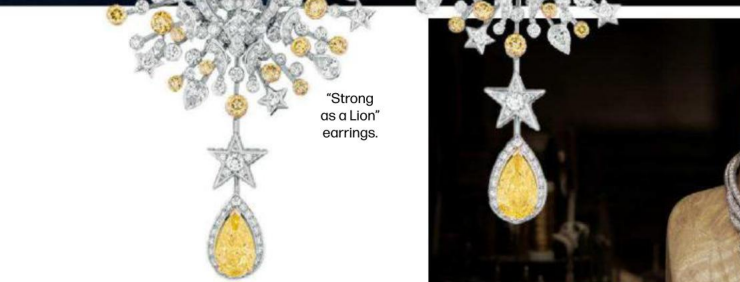
"Pink Hour" necklace.



The "Dreams Comes True" necklace in the atelier.



"Follow Your Heart" ring.



"Strong as a Lion" earrings.



"Embrace Your Destiny" masterpiece necklace.

● The collection imagined by the late jewelry studio director Patrice Leguèreau featured Japanese lacquerwork, a high jewelry take on wings and notions of transmission.

BY LILY TEMPLETON  
EXHIBITION PHOTOS BY MOMO ANGELA

**KYOTO** — Shining stars and majestic lions may rule at Chanel, but for its latest high jewelry collection unveiled Monday, soaring to the top is all down to having a moonshot mentality.

After all, the best example is Gabrielle Chanel herself, rising from the obscurity of an orphanage to the heights of couture and Place Vendôme.

Titled "Reach for the Stars," the collection

took cues from the founder's Hollywood era, a brief period of the late 1920s to early '30s that saw her design costumes for the silver screen and stars like Gloria Swanson.

"It's all about this idea found across the house that whatever theme we explore, it becomes inscribed in the history of the house but it also brings us back to Gabrielle Chanel," said Frédéric Grangié, president of Chanel watches and fine jewelry.

Case in point are the three chapters that articulate the 110 pieces, with around 90

unveiled at the Kyoto National Museum.

One explores comets as a symbol of freedom, nodding to the seminal "Bijoux de Diamant" jewelry; another alights on lions representing boldness, a recurring subject owing to the couturier's star sign.

Epitomizing the former was the "Dreams Come True" set, centered around a masterpiece necklace evoking a glamorous haute couture neckline with a lace-like cloud of diamonds and a cord-like black line serving as a graphic trim.

For the latter, the regal feline was portrayed in radiant majesty to evoke an aura of power, its features turning into a halo of glittering stones punctuated by stars as evidenced in the "Be the One" and "Strong as a Lion" sets.

In the lineup were some 27 millionaire pieces and a handful pushed into eight-figure territory.

Wings, appearing for the first time in Chanel high jewelry, were the subject of the collection's central chapter owing to her Hollywood-era designs but also to a phrase the couturier coined in 1938.

"If you were born without wings, do nothing to prevent them from growing," she said, a dictate that inspired Patrice Leguèreau, the house's director of the jewelry creation studio who passed away in November at age 53.

New as these may be in Chanel's high jewelry vernacular, wings are a theme that has appeared in the house's couture since her stint in Hollywood, a moment that also had an impact on her "Bijoux de Diamants" collection, according to Grangié.

"[Her] short period in Hollywood certainly had an enormous impact on the presentation in 1932 because [it] was very cinematographic, with mannequins positioned like actresses," he said. "Given those [designs] and a staging that could be a film set, it certainly influenced in the way she conceived and saw high jewelry." ▶



"Full Swing" earrings.

"Follow Your Heart" cuff bracelet.

The "Dreams Come True" masterpiece necklace.

The white gold structure of a "Five Wings" brooch.

"Follow Your Heart" necklace.

The legacy of Leguèreau will be no less important.

A masterpiece in the collection was the Wings of Chanel necklace, a graphic interpretation that unfurls to frame the neck with a supple openwork design with a long hanging pendant that can be detached to wear as a bracelet.

The idea of flight is furthered by the orientation of marquise-set diamonds on the wing's remiges, which are articulated to better espouse different bust shapes. A mix of folded and triangular prong settings further telegraph the idea of lightness, despite over 45 carats of fancy cut diamonds.

At the center of the design is a Padparadscha sapphire of 19.55 carats, a weight that felt particularly auspicious given the house's numeric signifiers.

The stone's delicate rosy-orange hue, evoking a glowing rising light, epitomizes another throughline of the collection.

Leguèreau "imagined pieces kissed by the light of the sun at sunset and dawn, with these colors that blaze on the horizon," said the house. "It's about that magical moment between day and night when the high jewelry sparkles on the skin."

Designs duly explore a wide color range in metal and stone that went from spessartite garnets and a 20.64-carat oval imperial topaz in the "Sunny Days" set to a cascade of velvety blue sapphires from Sri Lanka on the After Midnight necklace and the black DLC-coated gold cord in "Dreams Come True."

Taking pride of place among the 39 pieces tapping this motif was a set of five brooches, simply titled "Five Wings."

Each featured an intricate central element finely hand-painted by a Kyoto-based lacquer artist, the scion of a dynasty specialized in this meticulous and rare craft.

Leguèreau had "long been fascinated by this idea of excellence pushed to its pinnacle," recalled Grangié, and over the

years had worked bespoke orders with Yuji Shihou Okada, a master lacquerer who was distinguished as a living treasure by the Japanese government, as well as his successor and son Yoshio Okada.

The quintet embodied Leguèreau's vision of high jewelry as "an art form, a language, and a legacy" as Grangié wrote in a note welcoming guests to Kyoto.

"It is absolutely essential that we transcribe the creations of Patrice [Leguèreau] and the studio at the highest level of excellence so that these pieces sit in a patrimony on a 20-, 30-, 50-year scale and that one day, when a magisterial exhibition on Chanel in our days takes place, they are part of it," said Grangié. "That's a clear goal for us."

But before these jewels get another museum treatment, ensuring their way into collectors' hands goes through a crystal clear vision of what Chanel's high jewelry — a bright young thing established in 1993 — is all about.

Already, de rigueur elements for the Rue Cambon house were given fresh spins that saw them layered and interwoven, with stars peppering wings and both adding further sparkle to lion-themed designs.

"For Chanel, it is important to always bring themes that constitute this living patrimony that will have a capital importance in high jewelry," the executive said. "But we are still in this creation phase and that's what's different compared to more institutional houses who have two centuries of history and revisit themes that are their own."

Coming after last year's "Haute Joaillerie Sport," this year's opus was about "illustrating two facets of excellence such as we conceive it at Chanel," said Grangié. "It's about creations pushed [to their utmost] but with the iron discipline of being a pure player" in terms of craft, gem

sourcing and execution.

It's an approach that has served the house well in its bid to woo a clientele that spans those attracted to its fashions to high jewelry collectors, a highly savvy cohort that numbers in the hundreds worldwide in Grangié's estimation.

But having a clock topped with a statuette of Gabrielle Chanel standing on a diamond-set black jade base — a dead ringer for an Academy Award gong — snapped up long before the collection's unveiling is a happy byproduct.

"The priority of high jewelry is brand elevation, brand equity, so going higher and higher in terms of know-how, exceptional stones in service of a creation that will always be uniquely Chanel," he said. "The top line is a consequence that follows, that grows, but that's not the [primary focus] in high jewelry, which is about pulling the activity upwards."

And turbulent times rife with headwinds and macroeconomic challenges call for adroit navigation, even when equipped with such gem-set wings.

"Instability is likely to persist for a good long while so we are very vigilant," the executive continued. "But we are staying the course regarding launches, all the programs [planned] for 2026 and 2027 and more than ever, in terms of investment — there's no change there."

These include the development of new collections but also the pursuit of vertical integration and retail plans.

Buoying this cautious but not conservative approach is the even distribution of Chanel's jewelry business between the U.S., Asia and a bloc formed by Europe and the Middle East but also



"Embrace Your Destiny" necklace.

"Dream Comes True" earrings.

the jewelry sector's overall health.

"Not only is it a category that is resilient but it remains afloat and continues to generate growth," the executive said. "I believe this will continue in years to come and the category itself is very, very, very positive."

With branded luxury jewelry accounting for some 35 percent of the global market, estimated at \$90.2 billion in 2025 and expected to grow over 5 percent annually according to Statista, it remains a category of luxury where "potential for everyone" remained "very significant" for Grangié.

The presentation in Kyoto was therefore as much about honoring Leguèreau by following ideas he'd drawn up with Grangié as it was a celebration of the rich chapter of Chanel's high jewelry history written under his tenure.

A gala evening at the Shogunzuka Seiryuden temple kicked off with a drone show that had the title writ large across the sky above the former Imperial capital, drawing oohs and aaahs from a crowd that included Japanese actress Nana Komatsu, Thailand's Chutimon "Aokbab" Chuengcharoensukying and South Korean actress Kim Go-eun.

Grangié paid homage to Leguèreau as "the soul of the collection...gone too soon" while highlighting that the style vocabulary he imagined, along with Chanel's in-house expertise in high jewelry crafts and stones, will "really build the Chanel of the future."

"What you have here is a very, very important collection," the executive said. "I think it will make a lot of sense 20 years from now, 30 years from now because when you think about high jewelry, only the long term prevails." ■

## CEO Talks

# Bealls Has Quietly Become One of The Country's Largest Off-pricers



Matt Beall

**WWD: How has the company been performing after that aggressive expansion?**

**M.B.:** After COVID, we experienced a really nice boom – there was a lot of stimulus money out there, and I think business around the country was good. It was certainly good in Florida. Now, consumer spending has been getting a little bit more challenging. People are taking on more credit card debt, there's less disposable income out there with high inflation and high interest rates. So we're kind of ebbing and flowing along with what's happening in the economy. But we're enjoying being alive and getting smarter on the downs and getting bigger on the ups.

**WWD: How many stores do you operate now?**

**M.B.:** We're at around 660 and Stage is no longer Stage, they're all Bealls.

**WWD: You said Stage had operated Bealls stores too? Can you explain that?**

**M.B.:** Stage Stores was a company that was based out of Texas, and they went bankrupt just after COVID. They had the name Bealls and were operating around 50 stores under that name, along with Gordmans and Goody's. We used to have a bunch of our stores called Burkes Outlet because Stage had the rights to the name Bealls in about 18 of the states that we operated in. But we purchased the intellectual property from Stage to have the Bealls name, and we actually went through a huge rebrand after we did that, and renamed all of the Burkes stores to Bealls.

**WWD: I imagine that would be confusing.**

**M.B.:** It's caused so much confusion over the years, but it was a completely separate chain. It was a family business that Stage Stores bought back in the '70s or '80s and they had the name rights across the country outside of Florida, Georgia and Arizona.

**WWD: Was that also an off-price business and do you consider yourself an off-pricer?**

**M.B.:** Off-price is not really real anymore. Everybody expects things to be at the right value. We used to say off-price when department stores ruled the world, but now off-pricers rule the world. It's just what's normal. It's what people expect to pay for goods. I consider ourselves to be "on value": we don't have a big markup, we negotiate really well on our costs, and we pass that value along to our guests.

**WWD: Interesting perspective. Tell me about the product breakdown in your stores.**

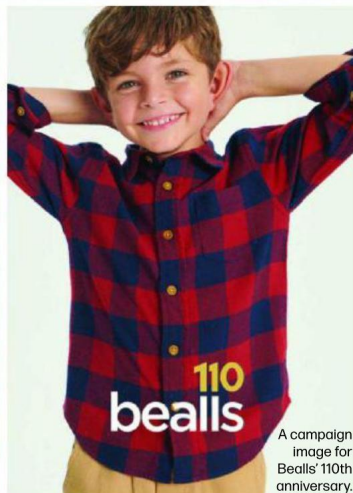
**M.B.:** It's a full-line store: apparel, footwear, accessories. We've got kids' and a nice-size home department just like you'd find in a T.J. Maxx, Marshalls, Ross or Kohl's.

**WWD: Do you carry national brands?**

**M.B.:** We are very much branded. In fact in just the last year, we've increased our penetration of high premium national brands by 15 percent. We were around 50 percent last year and we're around 65 percent this year. People still want to buy less premium brands, of course, so we carry that too, but we are moving ▶



The precursor to Bealls was named the Dollar Limit.



A campaign image for Bealls' 110th anniversary.

**WWD: You're celebrating your 110th anniversary this year. That's quite a milestone.**

**Matt Beall:** My great-grandfather started in Bradenton in 1915 with one store. It was called the Dollar Limit. He was 22 years old and had moved down from Georgia. They had cotton farms and he was leaving a boll weevil infestation of his crops. He actually lost the company to the bank during the Great Depression in the late '20s, and worked for about 10 years to buy it back. It became the \$5 Limit after inflation hit. Then it became Bealls after that when my grandfather came on board. He had a little bit more appetite for growth. So did my dad, but those conservative beginnings are still in our DNA. We recognize how critical it is to have a cash position and not get leveraged in debt. We protect that cash position as strongly as we can as a company, so that if something like COVID comes along and you have to shut your doors for five or six weeks, you can survive and come out strong on the other side.

**WWD: Was that your experience during the pandemic?**

**M.B.:** Yes, we purchased a distribution center in Texas, and we purchased the intellectual property of Stage Stores, which included the Bealls name nationally, and we opened about 150 stores over that two-year period that Stage had vacated. It's a different real estate market today. It's tighter, it's more challenging, which is strange because when you think about how difficult retail has been, there aren't a lot of empty boxes right now because there's less construction, and fewer deals being done because of inflation and the cost of materials.

- The privately held, 110-year-old business is run by the fourth generation of the Beall family.

BY JEAN E. PALMIERI

The story starts in 1915 when cotton farmer Robert Beall moved from Georgia to Florida to escape a boll weevil infestation that had devastated his crops. He settled in Bradenton and decided to open a dry goods store called the Dollar Limit, where nothing cost more than \$1. Eventually, that business was transformed into Bealls, a department store where merchandise was still sold at value prices – albeit a bit more than \$1.

Today, the business is run by Matt Beall, Robert's great-grandson, and it boasts 660 stores in 22 states under the Bealls, Bealls Florida and Home Centric

nameplates, employs some 14,000 people and has annual sales of more than \$2 billion. A turning point for the company came during the pandemic when Stage Stores in Texas, which had operated another, unaffiliated chain called Bealls, filed bankruptcy. That allowed the Florida Bealls family to buy the name and move ahead with plans to create one nationwide company under the name Bealls, which is pronounced "Bells."

Matt Beall, who has also become a successful podcaster, has remained true to the company's long-standing mission: to offer sharp prices on name-brand and private label merchandise to American families. Here, Beall talks about the company's history, its evolution from an off-pricer to a value-priced retailer and its plans for the next 110 years.

the needle in a significant way, very, very quickly towards a model that's much more similar to a fully branded retailer like a Marshalls or a T.J. – even Ross has tremendous brands. So we've got all the brands, and we're continuing to work on getting more. But there are a couple of divisions that are behind. I would say men's is very strong in terms of brands. Ladies is really the area that's made a tremendous amount of progress. The area where we have the most work to do would be home. That is currently something that the merchants are working very hard on to increase the brand penetration and quality of the product that's going to be a major step towards our future. When you've got a full-line store, you can't have one division that looks different than the others. It's got to be cohesive. And so I've really challenged our chief merchant and our president to really step up their game. So that's what's coming over the next several quarters.

**WWD: How much of your business is home versus apparel and accessories?**

**M.B.:** Apparel is the majority of our chain. We're also about 20 percent penetrated in footwear in Bealls Florida, but only 8 percent in Bealls. Just to clarify, we've always had Bealls Outlet and Bealls Department Stores, but we've gone through this dramatic rebrand and transformation, and we are becoming one Bealls. That's our strategy. The acronym is BOB: Becoming One Bealls. And my dad's name was Bob, and he was our last family leader. We're also going from Burkes Outlet to Bealls so it should be very simple for everybody.

**WWD: Is there a difference between Bealls and Bealls Florida?**

**M.B.:** Bealls Florida is really just a coastal chain. We've got 600 stores that are called Bealls and 50 that are called Bealls Florida. It's a larger box store, but it's still a Bealls. That chain too, is value-oriented. It's not high and low. It's not mark the stuff up high and run sales and sell it at a discount. We're over that game, that is dead.

**WWD: Have you seen a difference in your ability to secure product these days, with fewer department stores and struggles at retail in general?**

**M.B.:** No. I think that the vendor community has really embraced the partnership that they have with Bealls. We've got a tremendous merchant team that loves the vendor community, and the vendor community loves Bealls. They see us as an underdog: the last remaining big family regional retailer out there. And as their accounts continue to dwindle, Bealls becomes more important for them. I remember starting my career in 2004 and everybody had so many accounts. You think about what it's like today versus then, and we are very valuable to the vendor community. They know that we're financially responsible and that we've been a good partner for decades, and they want us to be around and to survive. And as we move toward one Bealls, that also is super helpful from a sourcing standpoint, and opening up new accounts that maybe they hadn't worked with in the past. That has really been a net positive.

**WWD: Do you offer any private label and how big a business is that for you?**

**M.B.:** In total, it's much bigger for Bealls Florida than it is for Bealls. But in total, it's about 8 percent or 9 percent of the total business. Our biggest exclusive brand is Reel Legends, and that's really a Bealls Florida brand. It's Florida's number-one fishing brand, and it's been a great brand for us since 1997. It's performance fabrications at real value pricing and the quality and fit are fantastic. Coral Bay is also a big traditional, mature brand on the ladies

side that we source direct. It's an exclusive brand for Bealls Florida. On the Bealls side, Silver Bait is a big brand from an outdoor fishing brand standpoint.

**WWD: When you buy national brands, is it leftover product or current season?**

**M.B.:** It's both. The bigger we get, the easier it is to do upfront buys. We still like to make it a treasure-hunt environment, so we're not placing huge orders with vendors. You're not going to see 12 of the same style, color and size on a rack. It's going to be smaller lots. But it's not necessarily leftovers, it might be cancellations. When business is tough, retailers make some cancellations, and we snap them up, and there's no time lost in the supply chain. It just goes from them to us, and we're buying it at a better price. And we pass that value along to the guest. It's a scrappy merchant team, they're scouring the market every day, all day, to bring the best value and brands to the stores.

**WWD: How do you differ from a T.J. Maxx, Marshalls or Ross?**

**M.B.:** If you compare us to a Ross, we are going to be more in stock. And you're not greeted with a security guard. You're greeted with an actual human being when you walk into the store that says "hello" and "how are you," and that hopefully cares about your shopping experience. We pride ourselves on guest service and we attempt to to employ people that embody our values culture. But purely from a product standpoint, we are going to be a bit more of a family atmosphere where Ross is all about cheap. They've got great brands, don't get me wrong, but it's all about, let's be \$1 or \$2 cheaper than everybody else. And TJX is more about being fashionista, specifically on the female side of the business. Bealls is really about being a family business. We want to have everybody in your family covered, and we want you to enjoy coming to our stores and shopping. We've got the same brands as T.J. Maxx and Marshalls, and we're priced between a Ross and a T.J. store. Ross is working on very, very low IMU [initial markup], and they can do that because their turn is so fast and they're more in metropolitan markets. We're more in core markets. So it's just a slightly different business model, although we're working hard to improve our turn and to get better brands and to decrease our markup.

**WWD: You mentioned a treasure hunt. Because the content changes so fast in the stores, how do you navigate that on digital?**

**M.B.:** That's the challenge, right? We were one of the first companies in America to get on the e-commerce bandwagon with Bealls Florida. I think it was 1996. Now, everything's e-commerce and I think that's huge part of the reason department stores are dying. And nobody's reading newspapers anymore, so it's much more difficult to connect with a guest on weekly sales and ads. Everything's digital. Everything's on your phone. So everybody's fighting for those few seconds that they can put their stuff in front of your face while you're looking at your phone. We use digital for our marketing. We do some direct mail too, but it's primarily digital advertising. We've launched an ambassador program for Bealls and we've got over 900 people in just a couple of months. The influencer thing is not cost effective and it's much more challenging than it is to have ambassadors. We reward our ambassadors through our loyalty program. We're about to roll that out to Bealls Florida as well. They've really reconnected with our guests and let them know about our product offering and great brands and prices. Over the last three months or so, it has really created a nice bump in our sales trend.



A Bealls Florida storefront.



Matt Beall in his podcast studio with Tiffany Cable, senior visual merchandise manager and a 37-year Bealls veteran.

**WWD: Now that you're celebrating 110 years, what does the future hold for you? Where are the growth opportunities?**

**M.B.:** It's certainly more stores. It's certainly better brands. It's to be the best brick-and-mortar retailer that we can be. It's about looking inward and becoming the best version of ourselves. E-commerce is going to be a part of our business, but not the vast majority. We think there's always going to be that desire to get out and shop in an actual physical store. And AI is going to change everything – it is absolutely going to disrupt retail in a significant way in the next five to 10 years. It's going to make shopping much easier to do just on your phone. But we have built this business over 110 years to be a brick-and-mortar business. That's what we have so we have to embrace AI and do everything we can to embrace technology. That's kind of what we've done for the last 11 decades: embrace change and change right along with it. Adapt and just continue to push forward. We want to continue to outfit your family for less. That's been our motto now for 100 years – nothing has changed. I think when you get away from that, that's when you can begin to struggle.

**WWD: In your spare time, you've also started a podcast. Tell me a little bit about that.**

**M.B.:** I've actually got two of them. One is called "Matt Beall Legacy," and it's about the legacy of our business. I interview people internally within the business and sometimes external partners. I've had Guy Harvey and Derrick Brooks on the podcast. Derrick Brooks is an NFL Hall of Famer and a charity partner that we work with. It's a great way for our company to be

aware of what's happening and a great way for potential employees that are checking us out to learn about our culture and how we operate. We've had a lot of people that we've hired because of the podcast – they watch it and want to be a part of what we have going on. I'm having business meetings with people anyway, so why not turn on a camera and record it and put it out there for people to enjoy and to learn more about our company.

**WWD: What's the other podcast?**

**M.B.:** The "Matt Beall Limitless" podcast. "Legacy" has maybe 3,000 subscribers across all channels. But "Limitless" has nothing to do with business. It's purely topics that I'm fascinated with and explore from a personal, non-business-related kind of place. It's been live for a year and a half, the same as "Legacy," but it's got well over a quarter-million followers. It's grown really fast, and it continues to have an upward trajectory. It's not for everybody, but the people that do subscribe and follow it are really enjoying it.

**WWD: What does the next 110 years hold for Bealls?**

**M.B.:** We have such a talented group of people that work here, and a great culture and I feel compelled to get out there and talk about it from time to time, because it's the people that are making the business special and continue to hopefully spread joy. We're attempting to make a difference. Of course, we want people to shop and get great product at great prices and save their money for other stuff. But we were also want to make a difference in the world and spread positivity while we're here. That's our goal. ■

# The Reviews



resort  
2026



## Balenciaga

Oops! He did it again.

For his swan song ready-to-wear collection for Balenciaga, Demna revisited silhouettes and ideas from his decade at the Paris fashion house — and capped off this effort with a see now, buy now Britney Spears collaboration and a playlist curated by the pop icon.

It was a low-key, rather last-minute unveiling at Balenciaga's airy Paris showroom, but loaded with content, with the designer also revealing he will curate a retrospective exhibition at Kering's headquarters from June 26 through July 9, open to the public by reservation. It's titled "Balenciaga by Demna."

The collection felt more playful than usual — and sleeker, his once bombastic hoodies reduced to filmy, body-con tops paired with slimmed-down sweatpants or skinny jeans.

Some of the women's looks were almost girly, including leather polo shirts with cap sleeves and frilly jabots, and cropped jeans with the hems ringed with faux fur. The sheer finale gowns were borderline fragile, one worn by his fetish model, the

American artist Eliza Douglas.

That said, there were still ginormous sneakers and clogs, oversize track suits and meaty, full-circle skirts in denim or black leather. Puffer jackets came extra wide, or pinched with a peplum.

Commercial pieces displayed Demna's formidable skill with wry logos: Here Balenciaga writ in black marker over strips of masked tape; there plastered on the garish ice cream treat charts you see on convenience store freezers.

Demna's successor after his final Balenciaga couture show on July 9 is Pierpaolo Piccioli, who penned a letter sharing how Cristóbal Balenciaga has been a touchstone throughout his career, most of it spent at Valentino.

Demna's press notes came in the same format, saying his spring 2026 collection "combines pieces from 35 different collections with new pieces and garments from my personal wardrobe, representing the volumes, silhouettes and attitudes that have defined my vision and my questioning of the contemporary wardrobe, what people actually wear, how they wear it and what the fine line is

between luxury and fashion."

He said working on the collection "felt like a homecoming after all these years, a very formidable experience of love for fashion and dressmaking."

Considering that his work has also "circled around the anthropology of fashion and dress codes, he conscripted Dutch duo Ari Versluis and Ellie Uyttenbroek, famed for their "Exactitudes" of various people photographed from the thigh up, for his look book.

Meanwhile, the Spears collaboration includes T-shirts, hoodies, caps and the silk twill flags fans hang in their bedrooms.

"I have always loved fashion and was so honored and excited Balenciaga and Demna chose to collaborate with me on Demna's last collection with the house," Spears commented. "These are some of my favorite images from such an amazing time in my career and life, and I'm so excited to share it with everyone."

Her playlist includes a new remix of "Gimme More" by Bfrnd that was broadcast at the spring 2025 Balenciaga show and a new remix of "Oops!," turning 25 this year. — Miles Socha





resort  
2026

## Gabriela Hearst

As part of a deep dive into tarot that will influence her next three collections, Gabriela Hearst has been throwing cards daily, and three have never come up. "The Lover card, Chariot and Satiety – the one about being satisfied," she said with a knowing chuckle.

To be sure, the uncompromising designer keeps striving to achieve the highest garment quality possible, which she credited for a 65 percent repeat-visit rate in physical stores and such ultra-luxurious bestsellers as cashmere knits embroidered with tiny glass beads.

Other than the colors – green representing creativity, blue wisdom and pink love – the tarot theme was etched lightly across her resort offering, strong on jaunty, slim-line tailoring and sensual sweater dressing, both categories worn with aplomb by veteran model Malgosia Bela in the look book.

Hearst discovered tarot as a teenager and her taste guides her toward the esoteric set created by Aleister Crowley, though her favorite looks in her resort collection are the simplest, executed in buttery cashmeres.

"It looks like a cotton T-shirt, but it feels like heaven," she said of one look.

There was an appealing nonchalance to the collection, which the luscious fabrics heightened. Bela could tie the sleeves of a double-face coat around her hips as easily as any speckled sweater, and pair a platinum pendant necklace with a tank dress, or a reversible men's trenchcoat.

The designer noted that some shapes are unisex, like her jeans jackets in recycled Italian denim and suede suiting.

In its endless mysteriousness, tarot represents something freeing for Hearst, studying it intensively and letting her



subconscious come up with an image she can portray via fashion – all the while discovering self-help tips, too.

"Most of our strife is always mental, and very little translates to the physical world," she said. "So in a way, I use the tarot to master the brain, because visualization is the best way to change your brain, to change your thought process. And if you change your brain, your whole life changes." – Miles Socha

## HOME DESIGN

# Ray and Charles Eames' Work Is the Focus of New Exhibition

● "Past as Prologue" will be staged in San Francisco until early January.

BY ROSEMARY FEITELBERG

In the legions of design power couples, Ray and Charles Eames were as accomplished as they come.

As a sign of their lasting influence on several disciplines of design and their potential to inspire more generations of practitioners, the Eames Institute of Infinite Curiosity will unveil "Past as Prologue: The Last Decade of Furniture Design by Ray and Charles Eames (1968-1978)" in San Francisco later this week. The exhibition will zero in on the husband-and-wife team's final decade of their collaboration. Furniture, graphic design, fabric design, films, architecture and exhibition design were their skills accelerated.

In 1946, Ray and Charles Eames were among the winners in a fabric design competition that was organized by the Museum of Modern Art and some department stores that culminated with a group exhibition the following year. After marrying in 1941, the couple joined forces on a multitude of projects until Charles Eames' death in 1978. Before Ray Eames died 10 years later, she planned for some

legacy building and her family has carried that out.

Debuting during San Francisco Design Week, the exhibition will be housed in the William Pereira-designed Transamerica Pyramid that has been revitalized by SHVO and Foster + Partners. This will be the Eames Institute's first public installation beyond the Eames Archives and it is part of a broader collaboration with SHVO and the Transamerica Pyramid to magnify the Bay Area's design power through a weeklong program of events.

Known to work well beyond what most would consider normal workday hours, the Eames were said to have worked six or seven days a week finessing their techniques and refining their design process to meet current and emerging needs. "Past as Prologue" will draw attention to new furniture that the duo created in their last decade of teamwork, as well as some pieces that have seldom been shown publicly. Those who won't be traveling to San Francisco this year have the option of one of the Eames Institute's online showcases. "Past as Prologue" is slated to be on view through early January.

From 1968 to 1978, the Eames preferred to refine earlier iconic furniture pieces with new materials and more-of-the-moment concerns like how ergonomics

could be put to use to help sedentary office workers. The Institute's chief curator, Lllisa Demetrios, who is Ray and Charles Eames' granddaughter said, "As an often-overlooked era of my grandparents' designs, it felt imperative to uncover some ephemera that isn't always highlighted...."

Visitors will be able to pick up some memorabilia, thanks to The Eames

Institute partnering on two retail spaces in the Transamerica Pyramid. There will be new and vintage merchandise, including furniture, books and home items in the lobby outpost. There will also be a gift shop in the gallery space with exhibition catalogues, current books on the Eames legacy and gift items.

With thousands of artifacts, The Eames Collection showcases the pair's creations, methodologies and far-ranging interests. The namesake institute aims to introduce more people to the Eameses' outlook and to inspire others to use creative problem solving to shape the world in a positive light. Somehow they made it look easier than it was, as Charles Eames liked to say, "the blood never shows."



## FASHION

# Christian Siriano, Bob Mackie and Coco Rocha to Set Sail With Cunard



● Fashion shows, a film screening and modeling tips will be part of the programming out at sea.

BY ROSEMARY FEITELBERG

Cunard has tapped Christian Siriano, Bob Mackie and Coco Rocha for the return of its Transatlantic Fashion Week voyage.

The style-minded trio won't set sail aboard the Queen Mary 2 until October, but they spoke of their plans – and by Siriano's own admission – with a trace of trepidation. The weeklong voyage from New York to Southampton, England will be the first one that has been held since the pandemic. It will feature two runway shows featuring a selection of Siriano's designs from the past 16 years, including looks that were worn by actresses and musicians. Guests will be able to catch

a screening of the documentary "Bob Mackie: Naked Illusion," and listen to a Q&A with the storied designer. And Rocha will be offering travelers a sampling of her signature model camp with primers about poise, modeling and fashion.

Having always wanted to do a show on a boat – as in a yacht – Siriano was game, when the prospect of a cruise was presented. Five hundred people will be able to sit and watch each of the two shows. Excited about joining Mackie and Rocha at sea, the designer said, "We want to make everything fabulous and get people inspired. What's cool, too, is that everybody gets dressed up for dinner and tea. It's a very fashionable kind of cruise – old-school style."

Siriano, who recently closed his Westport, Conn. store, is scouting New York City locations. He just launched a fashion boot camp for aspiring designers

– a two-day crash course in sketching, draping and sewing for 80 people that is being held in his studio once a month in June, July and August. The current crop ranges in age from 15 to 65. He said his idea riffs on Rocha's model camp.

Rocha said she already told Siriano that she wants to be fully dressed in multiple outfits from morning, noon and night so travelers will see next-level fashion.

Having been on a Cunard cruise before with a Julien's Auction tie-in, Mackie said, "It's just magical. You feel like you're leading another life, and that's not bad."

Siriano told him, "I want one dress from Cher to wear. Don't forget it."

When the designer, who has never been on a cruise before, heard that Mackie's other crossing involved the captain informing him that they were passing "the final resting place of the Titanic," Siriano piped up, "We do not need to know that.

I'm so excited. I can't wait. I already picked out three things in the gallery. I'll be spending more money than I will make."

The designer will be offering sketching classes on board, too. "We're just bringing fantasies to people, who can't always see a fashion show. That's what's special about this cruise. People, who may never get to see a fashion show in New York or any other city, will get to see it. And this is for all walks of life, and all different types of people."

Siriano added, "And it's in October with the icebergs and we're all going to make it out alive."

As for the current state of fashion, Mackie praised the Cannes Film Festival's ban on "naked" dressing. "Everyone thinks I should say, 'That's terrible.' I think it's perfect. They've gone way overboard to the point of horrible."

New York City's street style isn't much better, according to Mackie. "Here on the streets, I've seen things that I never want to see. I don't know where it's coming from. Even last week in the Berkshires, the shorts were shorter than short and everything is hanging out in the wrong places. It's really terrifying."

Accustomed to being asked by strangers to evaluate their appearances, Mackie said, "That's a hard one. A lady, who was going to a wedding in London and had to wear a hat, held up a picture of the one she planned to wear and asked if that was a good choice. I said, 'No, it looks like a flowerpot.' She was kind of a full woman, [gesturing with his arms for effect,] so the scale was completely off. And I told her."

His foul-proof advice for anyone is, "Invest in a three-way mirror." Nobody ever looks in the back. You go to the airport early in the morning and you just want to shoot yourself, it's so scary."

Before flying back to his home in California, Mackie was hosting the opening of "Bob Mackie: From Sketches to Spotlight," an exhibition at the Soho Grand Gallery that will be on view this summer.

# WWD

Showcase your brands' latest collections and innovations in a special issue of WWD celebrating the **2025 Men's Premium Contemporary Fashion** in partnership with The Chicago Collective, the premiere national menswear show in North America.

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## FASHION

# Lindsey Wixson Stars in Taller Marmo Campaign

- The top model fronts the images with statement hairdos, riffing on fashion editorials of the '60s and '70s.

BY SANDRA SALIBIAN

**MILAN** — Top model Lindsey Wixson dons a glamorous wardrobe and some bold hairstyles as the face of Taller Marmo's pre-fall 2025 campaign, which is to be released on Wednesday.

Riffing on vintage fashion editorials, the images are loosely inspired by the work of Henry Clarke, marking the final chapter of a trilogy dedicated to legendary photographers the brand launched last year. Taller Marmo's founders Riccardo Audisio and Yago Goicoechea previously paid tribute to the iconography of Helmut Newton and Slim Aarons in the brand's resort 2025 and spring 2025 campaigns, respectively.

For the latest installation, the designers zeroed in on Wixson "as we knew we needed a girl who seemed to come straight out of the '60s and '70s," Audisio said.

"Lindsey was immediately our first choice: no one else could embody that spirit better."

Goicoechea defined the model as "an icon in the industry," which she took by storm when she first broke through in the late 2000s, rapidly securing works for the likes of Prada and Miu Miu and then starring in campaigns for the likes of Versace and Alexander McQueen throughout the years.

"She brings a level of professionalism that is truly extraordinary," continued Goicoechea, recalling the experience on the campaign's set. "Almost all of us in our team are her age and during a lunch break we found ourselves thinking how, as teenagers passionate about fashion, we felt like we were growing up with her. Lindsey started very young, and she has been a constant presence in our imagination. Sharing this memory was truly a special moment."

Photographed by Francesco Scotti and

styled by Alba Melendo, Wixson poses against the backdrop of temples and ancient ruins, in a nod to the collection's title "Odyssey." While Audisio's and Goicoechea's signature eveningwear rich in vibrant colors, sparkles and feathers is known to grab the attention, in the images Wixson's statement hairdos offer quite a competition. Coiffed in graphic lines or extending to crazy heights, the hairstyles conceived by Fernando Martinez and complemented with makeup by Chiara Marinosci amplify the flamboyant vibe exuding from the campaign.

"The hairstyles are deeply inspired by the editorials of the '70s, when beauty was a form of experimentation and there was a constant attempt to go beyond the ordinary, breaking conventions," Audisio said. "There are timeless images of models such as Veruschka, Marisa Berenson and many other legends, all sharing bold and visionary looks. It is precisely that visual universe that sparked our desire to add a touch of fantasy and to detach ourselves, at least a little bit, from reality."

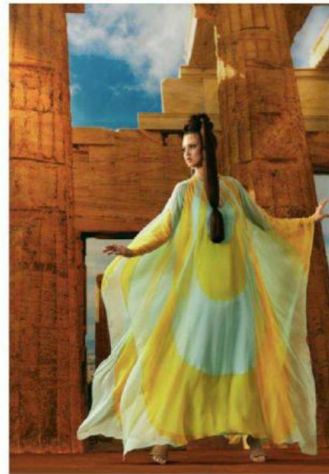
As for the collection, which is hitting the stores this month, it offers Taller Marmo's signature high-glam silhouettes — such as roomy caftans, one-shoulder gowns and fringed dresses that can fit any size — in a softer color palette featuring baby pink, aquamarine and lemon hues. Fabrications range from a bias-cut platinum fil coupé on a crepe de chine base to a metallic organza with a liquid effect and a sequined spongy bouclé for more texture.

Embellishments include the duo's beloved feather trimmings, as well as crystals running down the necklines and cuffs in fluid dresses — a preview of an upcoming collaboration with Swarovski.

Rounding off the lineup is what the designer dubbed the "Destination Edit," which features their most expansive swimwear offering to date via sets made of one-shoulder and halter-neck swimsuits paired with matching short or long pareos



Here and below: Lindsey Wixson in Taller Marmo's latest campaign.



conceived to seamlessly transition from day to night.

As reported, the swimwear proposition was introduced last year along with the launch of the menswear line to coincide with Taller Marmo's 10th anniversary. For the occasion, Audisio and Goicoechea tapped other two iconic models like Georgina Grenville and Mark Vanderloo

for the cinematic campaign marking these categories' debuts.

Since its launch, Taller Marmo has carved out a loyal customers base — especially in the Middle East and Europe — and worn by a crop of celebrities including the likes of Lady Gaga, Sharon Stone, Rossy de Palma, Viola Davis, Alicia Keys, Kylie Minogue and Róisín Murphy, to name a few.

## BUSINESS

## Victoria's Secret Delays Full Report Following 'Security Incident'

- The lingerie company's first-quarter sales topped its projections, but still marked a slowdown from a year ago.

BY EVAN CLARK

**Victoria's Secret & Co.** got its websites back up and running, but needs to huddle with tech support some more before reporting its official first-quarter results.

The lingerie giant's websites went dark for three days last week as it wrestled with a "security incident involving information technology systems."

Victoria's Secret detected the problem on May 24 and said it "immediately enacted its response protocols to attempt to contain and eradicate unauthorized network access, and third-party experts were engaged."

Its corporate systems, including some functions in stores and e-commerce sites, were shut down on May 26. The e-commerce sites were back up on May 29,

but the company is still working to restore full access to the corporate system.

The incident did not materially disrupt operations, according to the company.

While the tech trip up happened during the second quarter, Victoria's Secret postponed its first-quarter financial update, which was scheduled for Thursday.

"The restoration process has prevented employees from accessing certain systems and information needed to support the company's release of its financial results for the first quarter," the firm said.

Earnings will be released at a later time, but the company gave investors a preview with preliminary results that were near or above the high-end of its previous guidance.

First-quarter sales came in at \$1.35 billion, down from \$1.36 billion a year ago, but ahead of the \$1.3 billion to \$1.33 billion the company forecast.

Adjusted operating income totaled \$32 million, down from \$40 million a year earlier, but ahead of the \$10 million to \$30 million forecast.

The question now is how much the incident will weigh on the second quarter.

"The company continues to assess the full scope and impact of the incident, under the oversight of the audit committee of the board of directors," Victoria's Secret said. "Although this incident has not caused a material disruption to its operations to date, the company has incurred — and may continue to incur — expenses and other financial impacts related to this incident, which could negatively impact its future financial results, including for the second quarter."

It's been a complicated stretch for the Victoria's Secret board, which, in the midst of the website outage last week, also imposed a poison pill shareholder rights plan to prevent Australian entrepreneur Brett Blundy's BBRC International from buying the company without paying a control premium. BBRC has a 13 percent stake in Victoria's Secret.

Shares of the company slipped 2.7 percent to \$20.26 on Tuesday.



Tyla at the 2024 Victoria's Secret Fashion Show.

# SJ LOGISTICS

SOURCING JOURNAL SPECIAL REPORT

How do you navigate the evolving landscape of logistics? This in-depth analysis offers a look into the dynamic strategies transforming supply chains, from sustainable sourcing and materials management to innovative distribution and last-mile solutions.





Allison Stransky

## TECHNOLOGY

## Samsung's Allison Stransky Envisions a Bright Future With AI

- The chief marketing officer shares excitement about the future of AI, bringing Samsung's partnerships to life and advice for young professionals.

BY ALEXANDRA PASTORE

As chief marketing officer and vice president of corporate marketing at Samsung Electronics America, Allison Stransky is at the helm of the mega brand's marketing strategy, driving initiatives for the company's visions for the future of connected homes and its broader sustainability mission.

Prior to stepping into her role at Samsung, Stransky honed her skills starting in beauty and personal care before veering into tech and has experience at global companies including Google, L'Oréal, Unilever and Johnson & Johnson. At Samsung, she told WWD she sees the future being created.

As reported by WWD, Samsung has had a longstanding commitment to fashion, with the understanding that technology and fashion go hand in hand. The company has partnered with like-minded designers, including a recent collaboration with LaQuan Smith during the Met Gala, and media organizations to inspire people to pursue creative passions.

Most recently, Samsung unveiled a partnership with Ashley Furniture with a modern retail experience that showed how to create a smarter, more functional home.

Here, Stransky, talks to WWD about her daily routine, her career and the tech she's excited about today.

### WWD: What is the first thing you do in the morning?

**Allison Stransky:** You'd think because I work for Samsung I go straight for my phone, but I intentionally do not. I try to ease into the day with a clear head. Over coffee I'll do a quick email scan to make sure nothing urgent came through overnight – Samsung is headquartered in South Korea, so our nights are their days – but then I'll put it away so I can focus on my other job as mom.

I am also obsessed with health and wellness tracking and have gone all-in on wearables. My Galaxy Ring is with me always, and I love to geek out on my personal data – especially my stress levels. I look at my trends from the day prior and can set an intention for the new day. Having perspective on my overall health and wellness is really powerful.

### WWD: What is a wellness routine that's a must for you?

**A.S.:** Sleep. I've learned that I can't pour from an empty cup, and everything – my energy, mood, even decision-making – is better when I've had a good night's rest. I track how I'm sleeping with my Galaxy Ring – not for just the data but to hold myself accountable to wind down at night. And I have an automated wind-down routine in my Samsung SmartThings app.

At 10 p.m. the lights dim, we close the shades and change the thermostat to our preferred sleeping temperature. When my space tells me it's time to relax, it's time to stop scrolling and switch to a book or a podcast.

### WWD: What is a retail/tech trend that you're excited to see coming to life right now?

**A.S.:** AI-powered personalization in consumer tech and how it intersects with all facets of our lives. AI is a game changer and we're realizing its ability to optimize everything. Our mobile devices are becoming our very own AI companions, helping you live healthier, work more efficiently and even care for loved ones.

From a brand and marketing perspective, we have an abundance of rich data and can leverage AI to drive an experience that is deeply intuitive and practical for people's real lives. Not only that, but we can reach them with hyper relevant and personalized messages at different points in their journey.

### WWD: What is the best advice you would give someone starting out in their career today?

**A.S.:** Bring your whole self to what you do. Because in bringing your whole self, you're also bringing what's most unique about you, and when you hone your uniqueness, that can become your superpower. Live in that. I think real value is added when you understand what makes you and your perspective unique – and you find the confidence to share it.

The other advice I share with people, whether it's someone on my team or a mentee, [is that] you have to get comfortable with the uncomfortable. That's where you grow and often where greatness comes through.

### WWD: Looking throughout your career, what is something that you are most proud of?

**A.S.:** My career started in beauty and personal care and veered into tech. I have had the privilege of working at some incredible companies over the years, but I have to say, my first CES with Samsung in 2024 was a truly exceptional moment in my career. To announce new SmartThings and AI capabilities, we livestreamed a cooking demo with Martha Stewart from the floor of the Samsung booth at the Las Vegas Convention Center. It was operationally complex, but a showstopper. When we pulled it off, we looked back and said, "Wow. We are creating the future at Samsung, and people are so excited for it."

I've had a few other seminal moments along the way. At L'Oréal, one of my favorite roles was running the U.S. Garnier Haircolor business. At this time, we were really starting to understand the importance and power of digital marketing and knowing it can be tricky to pick the right shade of hair color. I think this was the beginning of me getting bitten by the digital bug that led to my next couple of opportunities.

### WWD: What is your ideal shopping retail experience?

**A.S.:** I'm definitely a hybrid shopper. I'll often start online, scrolling for inspiration and getting a sense of what's out there. Filling a cart that I may or may not ever buy. But I do love shopping IRL. Curated displays, touching and feeling products. Getting into a store is a luxury these days because time is hard to come by. I really appreciate the retail experience, because it's where brands can bring their stories to life.

In fact, I'm very excited about Samsung's partnership with Ashley Furniture. This partnership is all about seeing how furniture and electronics come together in a seamless way to create a smarter, more functional home. This kind of integration makes the retail experience feel modern, relevant and fun because shoppers can experience something unique in store that can't be replicated the same way online.



# Michael Kors, Lance Le Pere Honored By Fashion-centered Dinner

Peter Speliopoulos and Robert Turner were also honored on Monday with The Center's Trailblazer award.

BY KRISTEN TAUER PHOTOGRAPHS BY LEXIE MORELAND



Bette Midler and Michael Kors



Richie Shazam and Mel Ottenberg



Christian Cowan and Larry Millsstein



Ivy Getty, Elizabeth Sulce and Sarah Hoover



Lourdes Leon



Peter Speliopoulos and Lance Le Pere



Sarah McBride



Brandon Blackwood

On Monday night, The LGBT Center – colloquially, The Center – opened its doors in the West Village for the annual Fashion Centered dinner. The invite-only event, which took place just as Pride Month got underway, brings the fashion and creative industries together to raise awareness and crucial support for The Center. Resources offered by The Center include programs for youth, health services including substance abuse treatment and mental health support, and a physical space for community to gather.

Michael Kors and husband Lance Le Pere arrived during cocktail hour in tandem with Bette Midler, who would later present the couple with The Center's inaugural Lifetime Achievement Award.

"I was fortunate to come of age at a time where maybe things weren't as tough out there as they are right now, and I had a very supportive family overall," said Kors, who grew up on Long Island. "But The Center is here for people who aren't in that situation. So I'm happy to support The Center for all these years. And the work they do is remarkable. The people here are heroes. I stand and bow to them. I really do."

Asked what Pride Month represents for him, Kors made sure to include the other 11 months in his answer.

"I like to think that we should be celebrating Pride 365 days a year," he said. "More than ever we have to make some noise and say to young people in particular: 'You're not alone. You do have a place to come to. You have community and you need to live your best life.' That's what it's all about."

During cocktail hour, guests including Presley Oldham, Christian Cowan, Brandon Blackwood, Lourdes Leon, Ladyfag, Ivy Getty, Sarah Hoover, Isaac Boots, Adam Eli, Richie Shazam and more mingled in The Center's brick-walled courtyard.

Peter Speliopoulos, who cofounded the Fashion Centered event, was being honored with the Trailblazer award with husband Robert Turner. "It was important to have the event here," said Speliopoulos, standing next to event cochair Dorothy Berwin. "To have everyone feel what happens here and the soul of The Center and the work that's done here," he added. "This place is a beacon for the entire nation."

The celebratory event was underscored by a sense of urgency. During the appetizer course, Congresswoman Sarah McBride of

Delaware took the stage to deliver a call to action.

"While we say 'happy pride' this June, we gather here in this hallowed space to in so many ways return to the roots of Pride," said McBride, the first transgender person elected to Congress. She recalled an incident from earlier this year, when Colorado Rep. Lauren Boebert harassed a freshman Democrat using the bathroom inside the Capitol, mistaking her for McBride. "This community knows hardship, we know challenges, but what we recognize in Pride is that it has always been in our most significant challenges that we take our biggest steps forward as a community," McBride added. "And The Center for so many years has been at the

heart of forging community, and through it forging progress of meeting significant, seemingly impossible challenges, with hope, with joy, with authenticity, and with support."

After dinner, Midler arrived onstage to introduce longtime friends Kors and Le Pere with a touching tribute. Before her arrival, the crowd had been instructed to shout out their favorite Midler films and songs.

"I'd like to start by saying to those of you who don't know me: You're probably at the wrong event," Midler said.



Amber Iman in "Goddess."

Austin Scott and Iman in rehearsal for "Goddess."



# Amber Iman Brings 'Goddess' Alive

The actress leads the new musical, set in an Afro-jazz club in Mombasa, Kenya.

BY KRISTEN TAUER

**The week after** the opening of "Goddess" at the Public Theater, the musical's lead Amber Iman was busy as ever. A cofounder of Black Women on Broadway, Iman was in final meetings and preparation in the days leading up to the initiative's fourth annual award ceremony. This year's event, which took place on Monday, honored LaTanya Richardson Jackson, LaChanze and Khaila Wilcoxon. "I'm a pretty busy girl in the

daytime," Iman says in the lead up to the event.

Recently, she's also been pretty busy in the evenings. Iman is in the last stretch of performances for the New York debut of "Goddess," closing out a well-received run at the off-Broadway theater. "The Public is such a New York institution. It's been a dream of mine to work at the Public forever," Iman says. "It's the house that built 'Hamilton' and 'Hell's Kitchen' and

so many others. New York audiences, they come to listen and be engaged and to be able to feel that energy is so wonderful."

"Goddess" also marks Iman's first time leading a musical, 13 years after she first moved to New York from Atlanta. "I and the entire cast and the crew, we've poured so much into getting the show to New York City," says Iman, who also starred in the show's world premiere at Berkeley

Repertory Theatre in California in 2022. "There have been so many times we were supposed to be here and the timing, for whatever reason, we're here now, and I'm just super proud."

Iman, who last year received a Tony nomination for her featured role in "Lempicka" on Broadway, has been involved with "Goddess" for eight years. She was brought onboard by playwright, and fellow Black Women on Broadway cofounder, Jocelyn Bioh. Bioh collaborated with show creator and director Saheem Ali — of 2023's "Fat Ham" — on the show's book, but stepped away from the creative team project shortly before previews at the Public started.

"She is a dear, close friend. She was like, 'I'm working on this show called "Goddess," and I think you should be the Goddess,'" Iman recalls. "I have developed wonderful relationships with folks in theater, and when I know their track record and they have a reputation for doing work that is compelling, that is challenging, shows women — especially Black women, especially dark-skinned Black women — as fully thought out, I just say yes."

Many years in the making, "Goddess" has emerged on the stage as an exuberant, energetic musical that delivers big dance numbers and powerful vocal performances from the ensemble cast. The show is inspired by the myth of beautiful music goddess Marimba, who takes the form of Nadira in the show, played by Iman. In an attempt to skirt her mother's evil expectations for her, Nadira takes up residence on Earth within the Moto Moto jazz nightclub in Mombasa, Kenya. There, she meets the young son of a politician family, who attends the club in secret disobedience of his father.

"I only work on new musicals. I've never worked on a revival, so it's all I know," Iman says. "That's pretty cool, and that creative teams understand and respect me as a collaborator and that they invite me into the room," she adds. "Because they know I have a point of view and I'm gonna ask questions, and that I am present for the collaboration and the build. Pretty much my entire career has been collaborative and building — and it's hard. I don't really get to rest."

Despite the demanding nature of the show — "it's Olympic," Iman says — she's excited about the legacy that "Goddess" and her character have already created, adding a new female voice to the musical theater canon.

As the production nears the end of its Public Theater run, Iman calls back to her opening lyrics in the show.

"I sing, 'on a night with no breeze, the sweat drips down my chocolate skin,'" she says. "And the intention of chocolate, meaning every woman behind me has to have chocolate skin, is beautiful. It's making space for women who are not often given opportunities to lead."

"That's one of the blessings of originating [this role] — this has been built on me, on my voice, on my body," she adds. "I'm 5'11". I'm not small. And I feel like it's allowing other women of size and stature to take up space. And so I'm grateful to be able to be the builder of Nadira."

# Fashion Scoops

## Logging on In Tweed

Chanel last week finally jumped on the Xiaohongshu bandwagon and posted its first video to promote the brand's Métiers d'Art 2025 collection revealed in Hangzhou last December.

The 34-second clip, featuring model Liu Wen sharing her experience opening the show, so far has garnered 2,700 likes and 331 comments, and helped the brand gain around 3,150 followers over the weekend on Xiaohongshu, arguably the most important social media ecosystem post-pandemic for brands to engage with Chinese-speaking, fashion-forward audiences around the world.

The Parisian haute couture house is one of the last major luxury players to open an official account for its fashion business on the platform. Chanel Beauty, meanwhile, has been running a highbrow official account since July 2020.

Previously a more local phenomenon known mostly to local fashion executives, Xiaohongshu, which is also known as Red Note or Booktok, rose to global fame in January when it became the most downloaded free app on the U.S. App Store as "TikTok refugees" started to look for an alternative platform in the face of a looming TikTok ban in the U.S.

Founded in 2013 by Miranda Qu and Charliwin Mao as a shopping guide for Chinese travelers internationally, the app was able to attract an initial user base that was affluent and in the know. Its cachet remains to this day, as it has evolved from a product recommendation platform into a full e-commerce operation.

With more than 100 million daily active users, it is currently the third-largest social network platform in China, trailing behind WeChat and Douyin, which is the Chinese equivalent of TikTok.

Compared with its local competition, Xiaohongshu occupies a unique position in the market, especially among Chinese luxury and fashion consumers, with its highly curated, engaging, peer-to-peer user-generated content and an algorithm that accurately pushes these posts to users.

Seizing that irreplaceable influence in a market amid a structural

economic slowdown, Taobao and Tmall, Alibaba's core e-commerce business, last month joined forces with Xiaohongshu to launch a cross-platform shopping function in a bid to boost online sales.

Luxury brands began to embrace Xiaohongshu long before that. Louis Vuitton became the first top-tier luxury brand to partner with Xiaohongshu in May 2019 and started to experiment with livestreaming on the platform. — TIANWEI ZHANG

## Suit Up

Just in time for Father's Day, Vilebrequin has tapped Hamptons-based art Joel Mesler to create an exclusive print for a summer swimwear capsule for men and boys.

The launch of the collection will coincide with Mesler's solo exhibition, "Miles of Smiles," at Guild Hall in East Hampton, N.Y., in August.

"Joel bestows the same playfulness to his paintings that Vilebrequin does to our swimwear," said Roland Herlory, chief executive officer of Vilebrequin. "We are looking forward to launching this partnership which brings together two brands with the same foundations — a light-hearted sense of humor and the joy of living."

Known for his use of playful symbols, Mesler's paintings shed light on universal themes with humor and self-deprecation. The artist was raised in Los Angeles, where pool parties are a part of the culture, and used that experience to inspire water-inspired graphics with pool floats for the Vilebrequin print.

"It's an honor to work with Vilebrequin on this collaboration," said Mesler. "We're here to bring the joy and the fun to summer 2025 in the Hamptons and beyond."

Mesler also stars in the ads alongside his children, Lev, Ava and Naa, and others. Jamie Diamond and Sal Lahoud shot at the LongHouse Reserve and Mesler's home in East Hampton.

To promote the launch, Mesler will host an in-store meet-and-greet at Vilebrequin's Madison Avenue store on Wednesday and its East Hampton unit on July 17 where he will sign posters of the custom print with every purchase.

Mesler earned an MFA from the San Francisco Art Institute and he began his career as a gallerist



A preview of Chanel's Métiers d'Art 2025 Collection photographed in Hangzhou, China on Dec. 3, 2024.



Joel Mesler in a campaign shot.

before focusing on his own work. Vilebrequin was founded in Saint-Tropez in 1971 and is best known for

its colorful swimwear.

The collection includes a men's swim trunk, which will retail for \$325, a boys'

swim trunk for \$160 and a tote bag for \$180. The collection will be available on the Vilebrequin

e-commerce site and in its North American stores beginning June 4.

— JEAN E. PALMIERI ▶



A spread of Melanie Dunea's latest tome, "Amuse-Bouche."

## Food as Fashion

Melanie Dunea has another genre-bending project.

The award-winning photographer and Mood Studios founder, whose career has spanned portraiture, fashion and food photography is melding all of her previous subject matters into one. Called "Amuse-Bouche," the volume features models dressed in various delicacies fabricated and styled as clothing.

The book, limited to 500 copies – 250 each for two separate colors and covers – debuted on Dunea's website for \$295 on Monday.

"I'm calling this a 'book' in quotes because it's only 64 pages," Dunea said of the tome, which is printed like a cocktail menu. "It actually looks like you're opening up something delightful to eat at Chez Dunea."

On the menu are male models in bikinis of stitched olives, octopus necklaces and more.

"I have a great tailor that I asked, 'Hey, have you ever sewn some fish together to make a stole?'" she said, noting that models got to walk off with their wares. "It's this mix of spontaneity and joy, and I wanted everyone to be on board."

The self-published project took Dunea a few months to ideate and shoot. "It took a few months in the most delightful way, and for the shoot itself, we had 21 looks," she said, adding that the fabrications ranged "from shrimp to caviar to crème fraîche, which we pretended someone was shaving with."

For Dunea, the idea was to take her creativity beyond the confines of specific genres. "This one is about pushing those boundaries of, 'you shoot portraits, you can't shoot fashion,' or 'you shoot food and chefs, you must shoot food,'" she said.

She also took a stab at a new medium, having painted some of the interstitial pages between photos. "I'm pressing the rules, I'm questioning them. Why can't a book be a

menu? Why can't a woman wear an octopus on her neck? Why can't somebody who's 90 years old be in a fashion shoot? I wanted to pull all of that together and show that it's OK."

— JAMES MANSO

## Setting Up

If you follow Geraldine Guyot-Arnault on Instagram, you're familiar with her passion for fine Mediterranean cuisine – and charming, rustic Provençal table settings.

Now the cofounder of Destree has gone all in with a tableware collaboration with Cabana, which goes on sale Wednesday at Cabana's Milan store at 8 Via Borgospesso, and online at [destree.com](http://destree.com) and [cabanamagazine.com](http://cabanamagazine.com).

It marks Destree's first foray into home decor, drawing inspiration from Guyot-Arnault's personal taste, her extensive collection of crockery – and Destree's signature anise green shade.

The collection spans hand-painted ceramic

plates in a novel square shape, linen napkins and tablecloths, plus some belts and pouches embellished with French passementerie.

Martina Mondadori, founder and editor in chief of Cabana Magazine, described the tie-up as "spontaneous and organic," given her long friendship with Guyot-Arnault, celebrated with dinners in each other's honor – and a shared passion for beautiful table settings and vintage finds.

"She really has, not only a passion, but such an eye for it," Mondadori enthused. What's more, "we have a very similar aesthetic when it comes to a lot of things, and so it was really easy and organic."

Guyot-Arnault said she's been collecting tableware for years, scouring antique and flea markets all over the world, including in Tokyo, where she once found "amazing plates" that she wrapped as carefully as possible and tossed in her suitcase. "And they arrived in perfect condition," she said.

"I always end up with a



Swarovski's takeover of Cracco restaurant in Portofino.

lot of special pieces, very dear to my heart that I then try very hard to put them together."

"It's about the spirit of discovery," Mondadori agreed, recounting the roots of her interiors-focused businesses in traveling and sourcing.

Founded in 2014, Cabana is a biannual magazine and retailer dedicated to

home decor and tableware. The site currently stocks collaborations with Antik Batik, Ulla Johnson and Schumacher.

"Collaborations are the perfect way for me to express myself in different fields," said Guyot-Arnault, who cofounded Destree in 2016, initially focused on hats, handbags and jewelry, later expanding into ready-to-wear. Geometric shapes recur across all categories.

Mondadori acknowledged it was a challenge to find the right artisans to realize Destree's square plates, entirely hand-painted in Italy.

But both women are dedicated to preserving such rare craft skills, and exalt how special they are.

They plan to celebrate their partnership with an open-air lunch Wednesday at Passalacqua near Lake Como and a trunk show the following day at Casa Cabana. — MILES SOCHA

## Summer Glow

Swarovski has kicked off the summer season with a mood-boosting activation in Portofino.

The Wattens, Austria-based company has secured its own share of La Dolce Vita lifestyle and tapped into the Italian Riviera flair by taking over several spaces of acclaimed restaurant Cracco. This is the waterfront outpost of

Italian chef Carlo Cracco's luxury dining experience, which is also offered at his space in Milan's landmark Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II shopping arcade.

With its unique position overlooking the famous Piazzetta and harbor, the location has been retooled with Swarovski's vibrant color palette for summer. The focal point of the project is the terrace, which starting this week features seating and parasols in pastel shades of pink, yellow and light blue, as well as a branded octagon-shaped frame conceived for social media content.

As for the culinary counterpart, dishes will be served on porcelain sets hailing from the Swarovski x Rosenthal collections, designed by the brand's global creative director Giovanna Engelbert. The menu, which includes savory and sweet delicacies enhancing locally grown ingredients and flavors of the region, will be enriched with a Swarovski cocktail and dessert Cracco created especially for this collaboration.

To be sure, this is not the first time the company has tied up with the chef. The activation in Portofino builds on the success of the Swarovski Café staged at 18th century Palazzo Citterio in Milan during the "Masters of Light: From Vienna to Milan" exhibition last year. — SANDRA SALIBIAN



Cabana X Destree tableware.