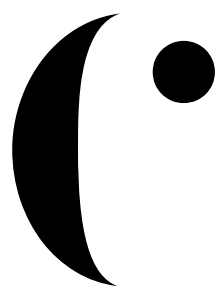


BRAVE NEW WORLD

BY ALEXANDRA KOHUT-COLE

A FRESH CROP OF NEW TALENT IS EMANATING FROM ESTABLISHED COUTURE HOUSES AND ONCE DORMANT ONES ARE BEING RESUSCITATED. ALEXANDRA KOHUT-COLE DETECTS A THRILLING CREATIVE TRANSITION IN FASHION RIGHT NOW.



Competition between major fashion labels is fierce. Yet, nowadays the giants are not just the maisons but the major money-spinning conglomerates that keep several of these thoroughbreds in their stables at once. PPR (Formerly Pinault-Printemps-Redoute) owns, among others, Gucci, Stella McCartney, Alexander McQueen, Balenciaga, Saint Laurent Paris (formerly Yves Saint Laurent), while LVMH owns mega names, such as Givenchy,

Kenzo, Dior, Moynat and Céline. It's not just about the design talent. To keep a major name alive is to nurture its heritage. In short, it has to earn money – and to do that a major star creative director is needed at the helm.

The career of Hubert de Givenchy, who founded his couture house in 1952, really took off when he famously collaborated professionally with the then young actress Audrey Hepburn. Upon the sale of his label in 1988, the now famous and infinitely talented, John Galliano continued Monsieur Givenchy's design legacy for two years preceding his promotion to the house of Christian Dior. The Givenchy torch passed to Julian Macdonald until the arrival of the gothic modern style

of Ricardo Tisci in 2005. And, since Tisci's arrival, sales have soared as he explained to the New York Times in 2007, "When I arrived we had five customers. Now we have 29."

The creative directorship of the brand that Valentino Garavani, famous for his trademark 'Valentino Red' dresses, founded on Rome's Via Condotti in 1959, was handed to Alessandra Facchinetti upon his retirement in 2008. However, by spring 2009, she was out and Maria Grazia Chiuri and Pier Paolo Picciolo, former accessories designers for Valentino, had taken over her role. Reportedly, Facchinetti found out after the press—perhaps the 'haute' of ruthlessness. For the first six months of 2010, sales were up by 10 percent. In 2012, the house that Valentino built was sold to the Qatari royal family for a reported \$857.46 million.

Fashion legends

Arguably the maverick star of his day, a Master's graduate of Central Saint Martin's, with tailoring nous from Gieves and Hawkes of Saville Row, and Romeo Gigli in Milan, Alexander McQueen burst on to the fashion stage when eccentric esteemed stylist Isabella Blow bought his entire graduate collection in 1991, continuing to advocate his work thereafter. McQueen spent 1996 to 2001, at the helm as head designer



❶ JOHN GALLIANO 2007 - BRITISH DESIGNER JOHN GALLIANO ACKNOWLEDGES THE PUBLIC WITH CANADIAN MODEL LINDA EVANGELISTA (L) AND BRITISH MODEL NAOMI CAMPBELL (2NDR) AND BRAZILIAN MODEL GISELE BUNDCHEN AT THE END OF CHRISTIAN DIOR FALL/WINTER 2007-08 HAUTE COUTURE COLLECTION SHOW, 02 JULY 2007 IN PARIS. THIS WAS WHEN THE PRESTIGIOUS FASHION HOUSE OF CHRISTIAN DIOR IS CELEBRATED ITS 60TH BIRTHDAY WHILE JOHN GALLIANO HIS 10TH YEAR AS DIOR'S DESIGNER. ❷ BRITISH DESIGNER JOHN GALLIANO. ❸ BRITISH FASHION DESIGNER ALEXANDER MCQUEEN CARRIES A FALCON AS HE ACKNOWLEDGES APPLAUSE IN PARIS AT THE END OF THE GIVENCHY 1997/98 FALL/WINTER HIGH FASHION COLLECTION. MCQUEEN PRESENTED A SPECTACULAR COLLECTION, PRECEDED BY RUMOURS THAT HE PLANNED TO USE HUMAN TEETH AND BONES IN HIS WORK. ❹ SAINT LAURENT - A MODEL PRESENTS A CREATION FOR SAINT LAURENT DURING THE SPRING/SUMMER 2013 READY-TO-WEAR COLLECTION SHOW ON OCTOBER 1, 2012 IN PARIS. ❺ FRENCH-BORN DESIGNER HEDI SLIMANE FOR SAINT LAURENT ACKNOWLEDGES THE PUBLIC DURING THE SPRING/SUMMER 2013 READY-TO-WEAR COLLECTION SHOW ON OCTOBER 1, 2012 IN PARIS. ❻ BALMAIN - PUERTO RICAN MODEL JOAN SMALLS PRESENTS A CREATION BY FRENCH DESIGNER OLIVIER ROUSTEING FOR BALMAIN DURING THE FALL/WINTER 2012-2013 READY-TO-WEAR COLLECTION SHOW, ON MARCH 1, 2012 IN PARIS.

THERE IS GLAMOUR

about an old couture big name fashion house that fuels the stuff of fashion fantasies. If you bring back the brand, you bring back the dreams associated with it.

of Givenchy until the Gucci group bought a 51% stake in his private company in 2002.

In 2010, the global fashion community was saddened and in shock to hear of Lee McQueen's apparent suicide. The undoubted loss to the industry was, at the time, almost too immense to contemplate. Yet, the Alexander McQueen brand held such sway that it continues to roll in the money with McQueen's long term co-designer, Mancunian talent Sarah Burton, as creative director. Having worked closely together for 14 years, including Burton's one-year internship while a student at CSM and as head of womenswear design since 2000; Burton was the natural successor. And, she designed the wedding dress of the century, of course, for HRH The Duchess of Cambridge on her marriage to HRH Prince William. In April 2012, Burton hit Time magazine's annual "100 Most Influential People" list and was awarded an OBE the same year. Sales of the brand are consistent with her ever-growing critical acclaim.

A competitive edge

But right now the real story whipping up frenzy within the fashion world is that of Slimane versus Simons with the S/S13 headlines screaming of a fashion face-off pitching the houses of Dior against Saint Laurent to a backdrop of a heavily-styled crowd baying for blood.

In the PPR corner is 44-year-old French born Italian-Tunisian Hedi Slimane who took over as creative director of Yves Saint Laurent in March 2012. He has promptly dropped the 'Yves' from Saint Laurent but he will never, while he helms SL, dodge the shadow of Yves Henri Donat Mathieu-Saint-Laurent (1936-2008) considered one of the greatest fashion designers of all time and who succeeded Christian Dior at only 21. Stefano Pilati was dismissed to make way for Slimane and the brand also has a successful history under the design talent of Alber Elbaz and Tom Ford. Yet, it is a return to the brand for Slimane, who leaves a solid five-year track record at Dior Homme in his wake, as he was previously collections and art director of YSL from 1997-1999. His first show for Saint Laurent Paris SS/13 came across as if he was a little uncertain of his direction and perhaps wished he could have hidden underneath the witch-like hats that he sent down the runways on his models for the show. Betty Catroux, a favourite muse of Saint Laurent, was noticeably supportive in the audience.

And in the LVMH corner Raf Simons, 44, Belgian, took over in April 2012, from John Galliano at Christian Dior following stellar success at Jil Sander/ since 2005. But LVMH took more than a year to make their final decision after John Galliano was fired for an anti-semitic outburst. Second in command Bill Gayton steered the ship on course during that time. Simons, who follows such illustrious greats previously at Dior as Marc Bohan and Gianfranco Ferré, had already produced a highly-acclaimed Dior couture line in July 2012. But he certainly made a splash for S/S13 ready-to-wear with a cheeky tuxedo jacket dress in true YSL 'Le Smoking' style. For now, Simons appears as the winner in the PPR/LVMH war.

PPR have not yet conceded the contest as they announced in November 2012 that genius Balenciaga creative director Nicolas Ghesquière will leave to open his own house. And the big news in early December 2012, was that his replacement is the streetwise and hip 28-year-old Taiwanese-American Alexander Wang, the first Asian ever to head a Parisian house, who started his own hugely successful label at 23.

Creators of style

TThe currently dormant house of the iconic Elsa Schiaparelli will soon be rising phoenix-like as Diego Della Valle welcomes it into the Tod's fold. Vionnet's former creative directors, the Croce sisters are being replaced by an in-house team, young Sicilian designer, Fausto Puglisi, will take the creative reins at Emanuel Ungaro for F/W13, and Natalie Ratabesi was announced as Philosophy di Alberta Ferretti's new designer in October 2012. In the postwar fashion world, Cristobal Balenciaga was called 'The King' and highly revered by rivals Christian Dior and Coco Chanel. Who will be next to wear that hallowed crown?

There is glamour about an old couture big name fashion house that fuels the stuff of fashion fantasies. If you bring back the brand, you bring back the dreams associated with it. Fashion's new young Turks are grasping the Herculean task of their forbearers with the determination and talent needed to force these fabulous fashion houses forward. The celebration of the new is entwining itself around a thoroughly grounded respect for the fashion greats. Big names die hard.