

STYLE

MADE, a New York Fashion Booster, Makes Paris Inroads

By CHRISTINA BINKLEY

MADE Media Group helped launch several hot young U.S. fashion labels by providing a chic alternative to IMG Worldwide's famous New York Fashion Week tents. Now, MADE is taking its gig to Paris.

The company—a partnership among three fashion industry veterans—is working to become a hub for up-and-coming designers at Paris fashion week later this month. Fashion-industry insiders say new labels get little support in the French capital—criticism that MADE's partners see as an opportunity.

Helping to pay for their show costs, MADE will work with eight designers, including Damir Doma, Anthony Vaccarello and Gareth Pugh, during Paris Fashion Week. The firm plans to expand to work with additional labels for the February 2013 shows.

"We're dipping our toes in the water in September," says Keith Baptista, one of MADE's founders, who is also a founder of OBO LLC, an event-production company based in New York and London.

In New York, MADE has served as an alternative to IMG-organized events, helping to launch brands including Alexander Wang and Proenza Schouler. To ease its path in Paris, the group is working with the French fashion industry's overseers at the nation's Ministry of Culture. That means its designers will be recognized on the official Paris Fashion Week calendar, they say, which will help the labels build a reputation in Europe.

IMG's famous tents once dominated the city's fashion shows in Bryant Park, and later at Lincoln Center.

But recent seasons have seen the week's center of energy shifting toward the Meatpacking District, where MADE's venues, including Milk Studios, are located. Milk Studios is owned by Mazdack Rassi, one of MADE's three founders.

The Council of Fashion Designers of America and Vogue Editor in Chief Anna Wintour have promoted many of the new labels that are showing there, saying they represent the future of U.S. fashion. Joseph Altuzarra,

Patrick Ervell, SUNO and Billy Reid have all gotten starts with shows and financial and logistic support from MADE.

Shows held at Milk Studios, river-side piers, art galleries, the Standard Hotel and the Desmond Tutu Center have turned the neighborhood into a Fashion Week core. Of nearly 300 fashion collections showing in New York, less than a quarter are scheduled at or near Lincoln Center. Still, IMG's tents host many bigger, more-established brands. Michael Kors and Diane von Furstenberg will show at the tents this season.

MADE was launched during the financial crisis in 2009, when Mr. Baptista and Mr. Rassi joined forces with Jenné Lombardo, who was then an executive with MAC cosmetics. Taking on increasingly deep-pocketed sponsors including Lexus, American Express and mobile-technology company HTC Corp., the group offered promising—but struggling—designers show space and support such as hair and makeup services (provided by sponsors such as MAC).

MADE's existence is an example of how the fashion industry often is built on relatively informal partnerships. "MADE is about strategic relationships," says Ms. Lombardo.

Each of the partners runs a separate, primary business, and they say they aren't yet making money from MADE. Instead, they're forming what could become a larger media company with deep roots in the fashion industry and a backlog of goodwill from designers, some of whom are likely to become tomorrow's Ralph Lauren or Tommy Hilfiger.

"It's a unique opportunity for us to build a talent pool globally," says Mr. Rassi.

Mr. Baptista, Mr. Rassi and Ms. Lombardo have been working on the Paris start-up for more than a year. The Paris plan still faces hurdles. Lacking a Milk Studios-type space, they are still searching for a venue in Paris so they can offer designers the full-show services they offer in New York. And they say some, but not all of their sponsors have agreed to travel across the Atlantic. American Express, which sponsors their shows in New York, hasn't.



A model poses at the Carlos Campos fall 2012 fashion show during Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week at New York's Milk Studios, one of the venues used by MADE, in February.

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Obama wore a custom-made, ivory silk-chiffon Jason Wu gown to the inaugural balls. A flurry of activity followed, including an eyewear collection with Modo in fall 2009, two capsule collections—a sort of mini collaboration—for clothing line TSE, a nail-polish collaboration with CND and a cosmetics collaboration with Supreme Aufres in 2010. Mr. Wu's handbags and shoes debuted in stores in 2011. This year, he made a candle with Nest fragrances, as well as a collection of clothes, handbags and scarves for Target. His secondary line, Miss Wu, is set to arrive exclusively at Nordstrom stores in January. All the while, he produces four Jason Wu ready-to-wear collections a year.

"You can't just follow the path of designers before," Mr. Wu says of his generation of designers. "It was a different world then."

Marchesa, a label known for lush and intricate evening gowns, launched a diffusion, or secondary, line called Notte by Marchesa in 2006, two years after launching its main line. It has since launched a handbag line, wedding dresses, a tabletop collection with Lenox, and a limited-edition cosmetics collection with Le Métier de Beauté. The brand plans to launch a fragrance this week. A "contemporary line" featuring more daywear is set to debut in 2013.

Phillip Lim opened a New York store a little more than a year after debuting his women's line, 3.1 Phillip Lim, in 2005. Two stores, in Tokyo and Los Angeles, followed in 2008. The label then opened stores in Seoul, Singapore and Hong Kong. The stores were partly a way for Phillip Lim to control the way he wanted his line to be presented.

"I'm not sure if we were supposed to do that or not," says Wen Zhou, chief executive of Phillip Lim, referring to the opening of a store so soon after launching. "We just said, 'We can do that.' We didn't look at other brands, at how they opened stores," she says. "It might seem fast or quick but it felt right at the time. We don't

follow any playbook." The label launched bags and shoes early last year.

By contrast Narciso Rodriguez, in business with his own line since 1997, just launched shoes and bags earlier this year. Marc Jacobs, who launched his women's collection in 1986, opened his first store in 1997 and started selling a diffusion line, Marc by Marc Jacobs, in 2001. Donna Karan launched her separate DKNY line in 1989, four years after the debut of her main collection. She opened her first DKNY store in 1994 and her Donna



Rob Shepperson

His and Hers Shopping Rules

By SANETTE TANAKA

Stores are finally recognizing what seems like a basic fact of retail: Men and women shop differently.

Faced with increasing competition from online retailers, some bricks-and-mortar retailers are embracing a practice known as gender-based selling, where stores aim to lure men and women to shop by focusing on their differences. Knowing that men hate to browse, a store may group all its men's products in one location close to the entrance, and knowing women like suggestions, it may train associates to offer product alternatives.

While some retailers are hesitant about a sales strategy that essentially says to treat men and women differently, others have embraced it as a progressive model to offer the best customer experience.

"The traditional sales model, where you treat every single person like an average consumer, doesn't make any sense," says Barbara Kahn, director of the University of Pennsylvania's Jay H. Baker Retailing Center, which published one of the first studies on gender differences in the shopping experience. The study found women are most affected by personal interactions with sales associates, while men are affected by pragmatic factors, like the availability of products and parking spaces.

"Women are risk-averse, and will want to know more about the features and benefits of the product," says Deilia Passi, CEO of WomenCertified, a research and consumer advocacy group. Making the store experience more interactive—"touching a fabric, staging it with matching bags—will prompt [a woman] to want to buy more."

Men, on the other hand, just want to know where the product is and they "want their areas clearly de-

fined," Ms. Passi says. To men, the worst outcome is to walk out of a store empty-handed, she says. Ms. Passi says requests for her company's training in gender-based selling have increased tenfold over the past decade. Her clients range from apparel retailers to automotive companies.

Brett Beveridge, founder and CEO of Retail Outsource Co., a sales-performance company in Coral Gables, Fla., says nearly all his clients are asking for training in gender-based selling. Mr. Beveridge advises clients—from big-box electronic retailers to service providers—on how men and women respond to particular service and design choices. To cater to men, for example, he tells retailers to put information on fact boards near the products, so men don't have to ask questions of associates. Men "like to feel that they're competent and know the answers," he says.

Drawing from her training in gender-based selling with Ms. Passi's company last year, Judith Schumacher Tilton, dealer principal of Tilton Automotive Group, which operates two dealerships in Little Falls and Denville, both in N.J., says she is a strong proponent for colors on the showroom floor. When she got the newest Chevrolet Spark in July, she lined up techno pink and jalapeño green versions of the vehicle outside her dealership that day. Ms. Tilton says the colors and display helped sell the cars more quickly than other model launches, even before they were advertised. "When women came in, it was the first thing they saw. We sold them right away," she says.

While Nordstrom says its overall approach isn't gender-specific, it makes changes based on the behavior it sees from male and female shoppers. Last fall, Nordstrom moved men's grooming products and fragrances into the men's department af-

ter the store found through customer feedback that men would rather shop for all their items in one area. It also made what it calls "girlfriend dressing rooms" that are oversize and are separated just by curtain dividers so women can easily chat and share outfit fits. "We've learned that women like shopping together," says John Bailey, a spokesman. "It gives them some privacy but allows them to show their clothes to each other."

To become more female-friendly, Lowe's began displaying finished projects, like kitchen vignettes, "so you can start to envision how it looks at home," says Melissa Birdsong, vice president of Lowe's. Shelves used to be 16 feet tall around the store's perimeter and 12 feet in the aisles. The company lowered the racks to as low as 4½ feet in some areas. "What we heard from customers, mostly women, was that [higher racks were] very intimidating," Ms. Birdsong says.

Not all stores have embraced gender-based selling because it can be time-consuming and expensive, due to training costs and a high sales-associate turnover rate. In addition, some companies are hesitant to advertise a policy founded on treating men and women differently. Home Depot spokeswoman Jean Niemi says the store, "which is first and foremost a working warehouse," doesn't differentiate based on gender. "We don't look at it like men vs. women," she says.

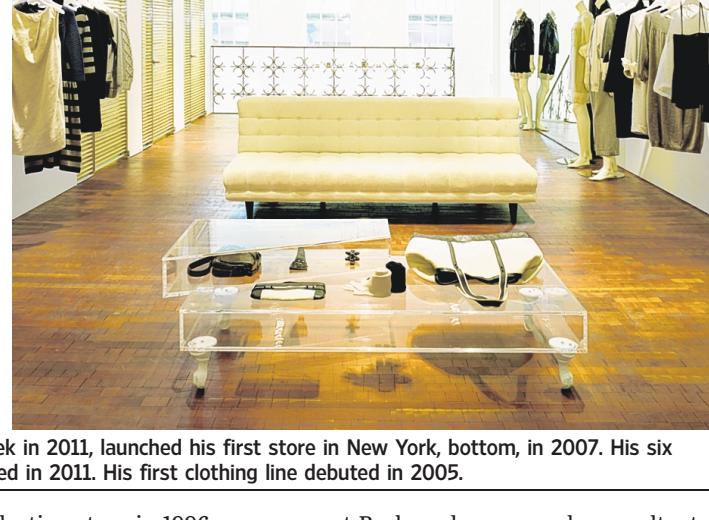
Jason Luna, 37, of Pine Bush, N.Y., says he prefers to shop solo, while his wife Mary "enjoys the process more." "I'm generally annoyed by active sellers," he says.

Still, Mr. Luna hesitates at the concept of gender-based selling. "There are definite differences between men and women," he says. "But on the other hand, I feel uncomfortable about a practice that automatically assumes differences."

Designers Churn Out More Clothing Lines, Accessories Fast



Retail rush: Phillip Lim, above at New York Fashion Week in 2011, launched his first store in New York, bottom, in 2007. His six stores include a location in Hong Kong, top, which opened in 2011. His first clothing line debuted in 2005.



making him reconsider the Nordstrom offer, he says.

"There are some things that I cannot or will not make for my collection because it would not be the right price point, like a T-shirt. [But] there was a price point I was not reaching," says Mr. Wu of the Nordstrom deal. Jason Wu's dresses average \$1,595 while Miss Wu will reportedly range from about \$200 to \$800.

U.S. sales of women's bags and luggage rose 6% to \$9.92 billion in the 12 months ended July 31, according to market researcher NPD. That compared with a 4% rise to about \$108.28 billion for women's apparel. Sales of women's fashion shoes rose nearly 3% to \$174.5 billion.

Mr. Wu says launching bags and shoes last year "allowed us to reach out to a broader audience that knows Jason Wu" but may not be able to comfortably afford his ready-to-wear clothes, where prices range from \$595 for knitwear to \$6,360 for an evening gown. By contrast, Jason Wu bags range in price from about \$1,500 to about \$3,000. Shoes cost \$630 to \$1,470.

Gustavo Rangel, Jason Wu's chief financial officer, says the label's shoes and bags already represented 17% of the closely held company's sales last year. He expects them to represent 25% of sales this year and 40% in the next few years.

Mr. Wu conceded that as a clothing designer, he lacked the skills to produce accessories. "I had to learn from the ground up," he says. He has since hired a two-person design team for accessories. The eyewear collection is licensed out.

Mr. Wu says he can appreciate some observers may feel he's juggling too many balls. "It's only too much when there's no market for what I do," he says. "If there's a legitimate market for Jason Wu, why not?"

New York Fashion Week»

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follow any playbook." The label launched bags and shoes early last year.

Karan Collection store in 1996. (Donna Karan offered accessories from the beginning.)

To be sure, each fashion house has different reasons for the timing of, say, an accessories line or a store.

Still, these days, it is the rare designer label that can afford to ignore accessories or other brand extensions.

"If you look at 15 years ago, you did your main line, after five years you do an accessories line, you could end up doing a secondary line and save the fragrances and sunglasses for the end of expansion," says Rob

ert Burke, a luxury-goods consultant and a former fashion director at Bergdorf Goodman. "Today those rules don't apply," adds Mr. Burke, who has advised young labels including Mr. Wu's.

Both Target and Nordstrom approached Mr. Wu about doing less-expensive lines a couple of years ago, but he declined, thinking the timing wasn't right, he says.

He eventually launched a line with Target, in February, which "showed me that there was really an appetite for my design," at lower prices, and