THE AUTUMN / WINTER 2025 FASHION ISSUE

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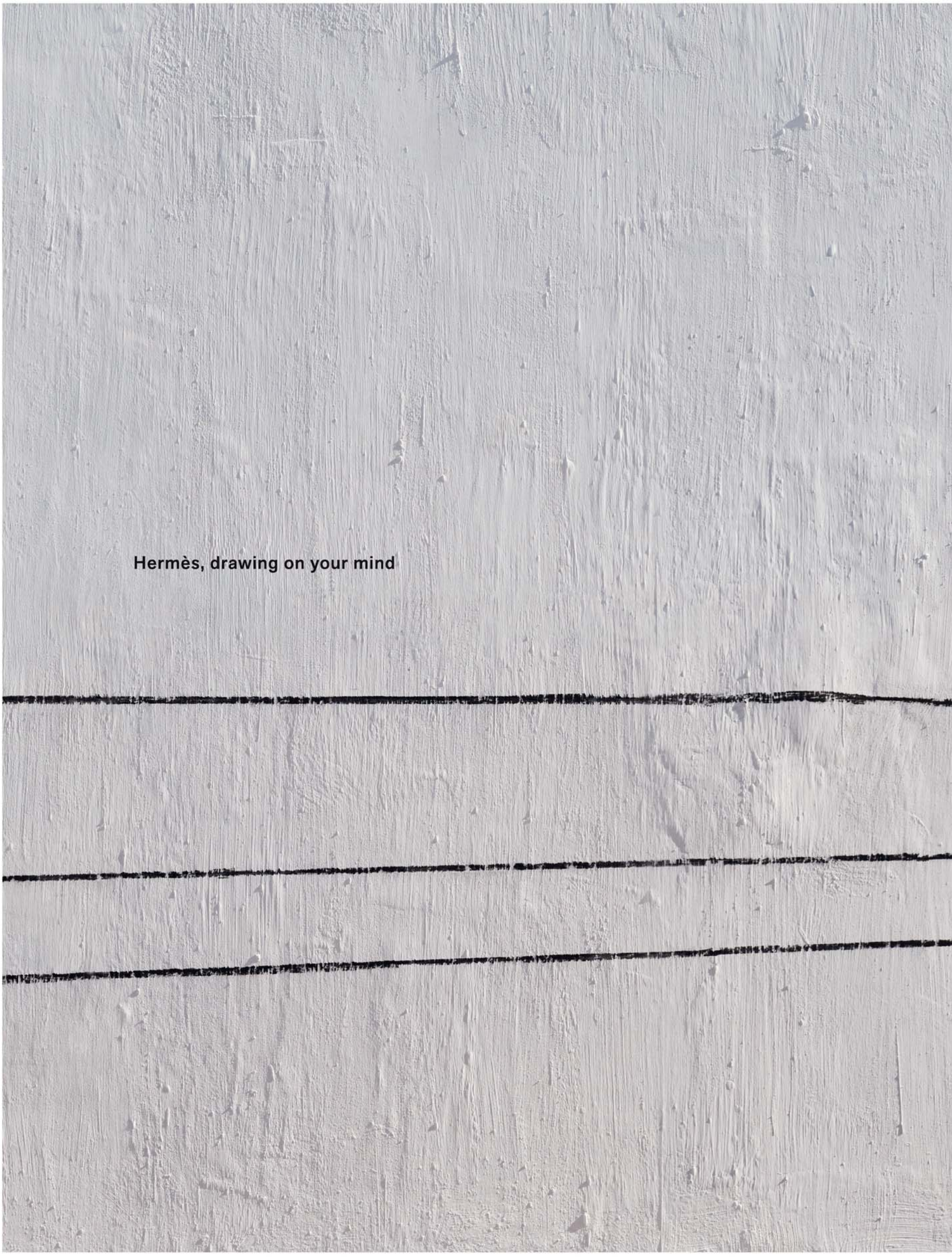
THE EDGE MALAYSIA
SEPTEMBER 15, 2025



PAGE TURNER

A tribute to the legendary editor who blazes a new path forward after helming a style bible for four decades

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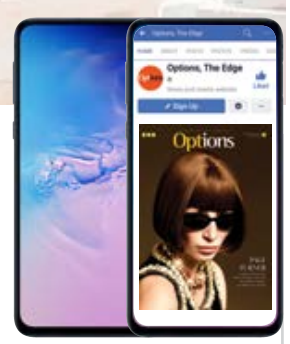
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THE HOUR GLASS SDN BHD 198101002545 (68659-K)



The new Emirates Premium Economy arrives 16 September. Upgrade your experience next time you fly from Kuala Lumpur. Look forward to reclining in soft leather seats with leg rests and room to stretch out. Indulge in delicious meals served on designer tableware. Experience Premium Economy and discover why it's worth the upgrade.

Emirates

Enjoy the premium pleasures of flying with Emirates



The airline's new Premium Economy Class weaves the art of hospitality into the utility of travel without the heavy price tag

There are two types of travellers: those who merely go somewhere; and those who make an art of getting there. The first think only of arrival. The second know that the journey, if treated with proper respect, is not an inconvenience but a performance. It requires a stage, some flattering lighting and a seat worthy of one's posture.

With its new Premium Economy Class, Emirates has set precisely this stage, and from Sept 16, travellers from Kuala Lumpur will be able to experience it first-hand. It may not be business class, but it is travel with just the right degree of ceremony.

Step into the cabin and notice at once that someone has thought about colour. Champagne, cream and polished wood suggest the drawing room, not the waiting room, with subtle details such as the Ghaf tree motif, rich wood grain and the 3D Bronze Wave creating a sense of understated luxury. The seats — 19.5in wide and inclined just enough to cradle one rather than collapse one — speak the language of comfort without shouting.

They are arranged in pleasing symmetry: two by the window, three or four at the centre depending on the aircraft, two again at the aisle. The mathematics of elegance is as important as the geometry of space. One reclines here, not to escape the world, but to enjoy it at an optimal angle. The calf rests extend like a bow, the headrests can be adjusted six ways, the leather stitching feels as deliberate as a well-cut suit, and the wood-topped cocktail tables seem designed for the sole purpose of holding a glass of sparkling wine in just the right light.

Charm is never loud; it is attentive. The three crew members in this cabin are devoted exclusively to its passengers. Their presence is unobtrusive, which is, of course, the highest form of attentiveness. They move like choreography, balancing safety with the lovely niceties that turn a flight into an exercise in hospitality. A drink in real glassware flatters the hand and eye as much as the palate.



Meals are served in Royal Doulton china, with linen napkins and stainless steel cutlery

Then comes a refreshing towel, a reminder that delight in the sky is measured by small acts of restoration.

Meals arrive not in boxes but on Royal Doulton china, with linen napkins and stainless steel cutlery. There is a choice of main courses, inspired by the regions passed over at 35,000ft, with liquors and chocolates to follow each meal. Menus change monthly to continue wooing the frequent flyer while the wine list contains not only the usual suspects but also a sparkling Chandon from Australia, poured with sufficient ceremony to remind us that bubbles, like passengers flying in style, are happiest when airborne.

Spirits, beers and soft drinks are curated with an equally exacting eye. Should one mark a birthday or anniversary while in transit, a vanilla or chocolate cake paired with Moët & Chandon Brut 20cl can be produced for a modest US$43 as a thoughtful surprise for a companion or a celebration for one's own self.

Blankets are woven from recycled plastic bottles — soft, sustainable and guilt-free — while pillows are generous in size, both unique to Premium Economy. Amenity kits in washable kraft paper printed with soy ink contain socks, eyeshades, toothpastes and toothbrushes for rest and refreshment. Children, too, are remembered. Keepsake toys, Polaroid photographs slipped into frames, and meals on colourful trays rouse their sense of occasion. After all, a child who begins a flight feeling important is less likely to loudly demand that it end.

Up to 6,500 channels in 40 languages are offered on the entertainment system, allowing the film, music, live sport or news connoisseur to browse as though he or she were in a private library. Children enjoy their own selection of films and games, with headphones designed not to slip off small ears. The very thoughtfulness of it all is a reminder that comfort is the conscientious architecture of care.

Such attention begins before one even crosses the threshold. Emirates understands that great customer experiences lie not in ostentation but in the graceful elimination of tedium. Dedicated counters in Dubai attend to check-in with the sort of unhurried efficiency that suggests one's time is valued. Priority boarding follows, along with baggage allowances generous enough to accommodate both necessities and those charming superfluities that make travel worthwhile.

For customers in Dubai, a constellation of remote check-in services beckons: City Check-In at the Travel Store in DIFC, Emirates City Check-In in Ajman, Cruise Check-In for those arriving by sea, and the rather delightful Marhaba Home Check-In, which brings the airport to one's doorstep, for nothing says relaxation quite like avoiding the crowd. Emirates Lounges worldwide welcome Premium Economy passengers for a fee, though Silver, Gold, and Platinum Skywards members slip in as freely as they might enter their own sitting rooms.

Emirates is not new to industry innovation. It was the first airline in the world to offer mobile phone connectivity, provide onboard Wi-Fi and, famously, order the iconic double-decker Airbus A380, now a signature product in its fleet. Premium Economy is simply the natural next chapter in this narrative, filling the space between the practical and the opulent, between necessity and pleasure.

It is a haven amid the clouds, where one may recline without apology, dine without indifference and arrive without fatigue. To travel well is a matter of cultivating the right paradoxes. Premium Economy does precisely this: It is indulgent without being excessive, refined without being remote, and modern yet faintly nostalgic for the art of travel as it once was.

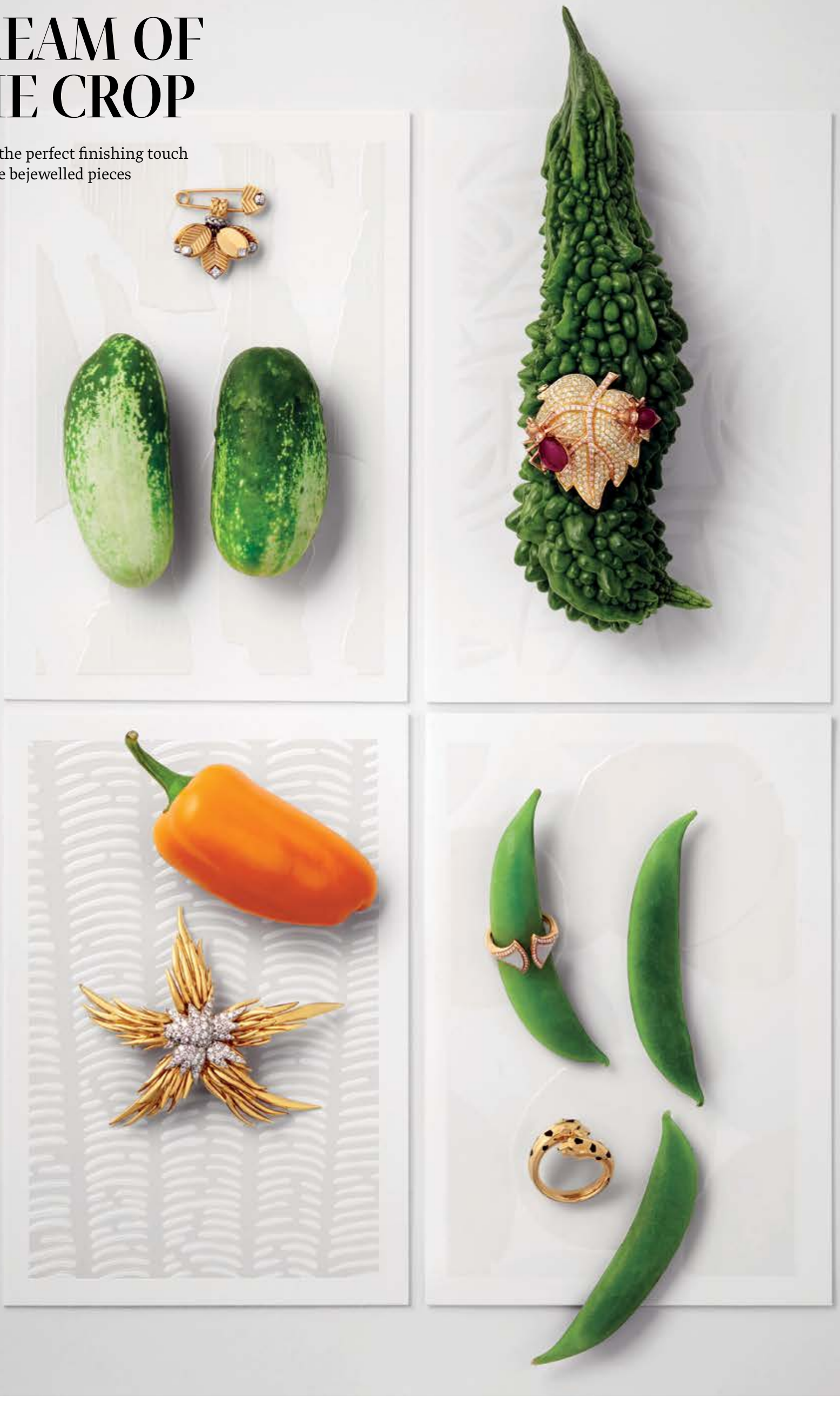
There are travellers who think of the world as a list of places. Then, there are others who think of it as a collection of experiences. For the latter, Emirates' Premium Economy is a thrill worth experiencing, bridging the utility of Economy with the pleasure of Business. Rather than an obstacle to overcome before reaching a destination, the journey itself becomes part of the story.

To learn more about this new era of travel and book your own experience from Sept 16, visit emirates.com/my/english/experience/cabin-features/premium-economy-class

PHOTOGRAPHY SOOPHYE | ASSISTANT RICK KEW | STYLIST DIANA KHOO | ASSISTANT AIREENA AZNI

CREAM OF THE CROP

Cultivate the perfect finishing touch with these bejewelled pieces



Clockwise from top left: Cartier Grain de Café brooch with diamonds (RM31,900); DeGem Ruby Ant brooch with cabochon rubies and diamonds in 18-carat yellow and rose gold (RM25,000); Bvlgari Divas' Dream ring (RM17,600); Cartier Panthère de Cartier ring with tsavorite garnets and lacquer in yellow gold (RM34,100); and Tiffany & Co Paris Flames brooch (RM163,500)

BOLD IN BLACK

Sophisticated picks with distinctive details to add visual interest to your look

BY AIREENA AZNI



Patek Philippe's Golden Ellipse Ref 5738/51G-001 is a work of art that will surely be a conversation starter. It presents a black champlevé enamelled dial with hand-engraved white gold arabesque and volute décor as well as *cheveu*-style hands. (RM387,700, patek.com)



Adorn your fingers with **Van Cleef & Arpels**' Perlée couleurs ring, which boasts an audacious design that embodies a joyful spirit. The onyx stone is cradled between clusters of 18-carat yellow gold beads and diamonds. (RM36,700, vancleefarpels.com)



Refresh your trinket repertoire with this apple charm from **Coach**. Made from resin, metal and crystals, the petite Big Apple tribute can be attached to your bag or keys for a unique twist. (RM890, malaysia.coach.com)



The iconic **Chanel** mini flap bag has been reimagined with refreshing elements — it features a top handle that interweaves gold metal with rows of diamantés. It comes with a removable chain-and-leather strap. (RM31,800, chanel.com)



Cat-eye sunglasses have revolutionised eyewear offerings since the 1930s, becoming a symbol of glamour in everyday fashion. **Loewe** enhances the chic accessory with the brand's barcode on the temple. (RM1,690, loewe.com)





The **Dior** Century beret is a stylish creation that adds a refined touch to any look. Crafted in wool felt, it is finished with a white CD resin pearl and delicate veil. (RM4,700, dior.com)



Complete your ensemble with **Gucci**'s thin belt, which stands out in shiny patent leather and a gold-toned Dionysus tiger head buckle decorated with intricate enamel details (US$550, gucci.com)

Cut from crêpe envers satin and jersey, this asymmetric evening dress by **Versace** sways between simplicity and sophistication. One shoulder strap is accented with Medusa '95 hardware while another is characterised by flowy pleats. (RM18,550, versace.com)



Part of **Miu Miu**'s exclusive Upcycled collection, this Chantilly lace top puts craftsmanship at the forefront. It is painstakingly covered in arresting artisanal embroidery from the label's archive. (RM37,500, miumiu.com)



An elevated take on the traditional pencil skirt, the sheer sequined version from **Victoria Beckham** offers a balance between elegance and comfort. It is stretchy and provides extra glow to your outfit. (RM4,450, victoriabeckham.com)



Defined by striking curved lines, the Rosa Z stiletto by **Christian Louboutin** has a slim strap that neatly wraps around the feet. Its 80mm heel reveals the house's distinctive red sole. (RM5,100, asia.christianlouboutin.com)

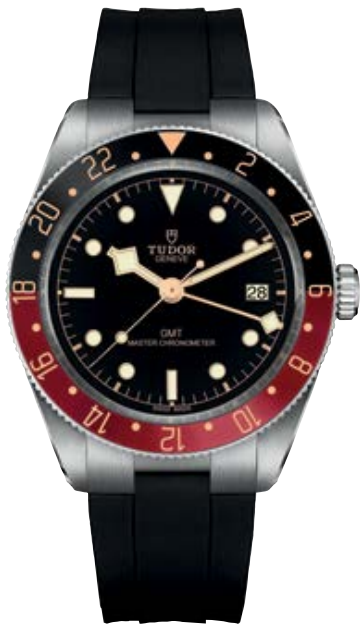


An avant-garde piece from the Tiffany Titan by Pharrell Williams collection, this **Tiffany & Co** bracelet is an expression of rebellion as a catalyst for creativity, spotlighting an angular spear-shaped motif and bold contoured links moulded from 18-carat gold and titanium (RM74,000, tiffany.my)

DRESSED-DOWN DELUXE

Smart casual pieces incorporated with refined silhouettes and timeless staples for any occasion

BY PUTERI INARAH



The Black Bay 58 GMT by **Tudor** is reminiscent of an era when jet-setting across time zones was a novelty matched by glamour and elegance. Blending burgundy and gilt tones, the timepiece has 65 hours of power reserve, built for weekend adventures — and Mondays, too. (RM19,490, tudorwatch.com)



You can never go wrong with a pair of classic black frames. The polarised Buckley sunglasses from **Tom Ford** are made from acetate, adorned with the iconic "T" logo at the temple. (US$500, tomfordfashion.com)



Celine's Boston bag is the ultimate holdall for work or travel. Suede calfskin with a waxed finish gives it character, while the structured shape keeps things polished. (RM14,000, celine.com)



This timeless saffiano leather belt by **Polo Ralph Lauren** punctuated with a "Polo"-etched buckle is a functional piece that quietly pulls everything together (RM560, ralphlauren.com.my)



This **Hugo Boss** slim-fit shirt has an easy-iron finish, making mornings less stressful. Worn with a blazer or on its own, the top is suitable for the boardroom and cool enough for dinner after. (RM550, hugoboss.com)





Keep yourself snug with this knit hood from **Massimo Dutti**. Bonus: It is made from recycled fibres and used garments, so you will feel good wearing it, too. (RM369, massimodutti.com)



Jo Malone's Myrrh & Tonka cologne wraps you in warmth from the very first spray. Rich and comforting, the fresh lift of lavender melts into the smokiness of Namibian myrrh, grounded by creamy tonka bean. (RM675, jomalone.com.my)



Kenzo's virgin wool jacquard trousers boast an intricate weave that lends visual and tactile interest. Multiple roomy pockets ensure your essentials stay close without compromising style. (RM3,130, kenzo.com)

The house polo jumper by **JW Anderson** presents a modern take on retro knitwear with its archive design and beige melange palette. Hand-embroidered details and horn buttons give the cozy piece an elaborate finish. (RM6,850, jwanderson.com)



The classic leather jacket is elevated through this parka from **Givenchy** — the cocoon-like volume and relaxed fit balances street attitude and effortless sophistication (RM49,000, givenchy.com)



Prada's Collapse Re-Nylon sneakers are perfect for long walks. With a feather-light sole and elastic sides for easy slip-on, the sporty shoe has a vintage lived-in finish that looks even better worn. (RM4,800, prada.com)



These socks from **Thom Browne** were designed to clash in the best way. Wear them with cropped trousers to showcase the bold patchwork and signature 4-bar detailing. (RM950, thombrowne.com)

150 YEARS

AUDEMARS PIGUET

Le Brassus



AUDEMARS PIGUET BOUTIQUE KUALA LUMPUR :
THE STARHILL, UPPER GROUND FLOOR

Royal Oak

SPLURGE



WHO:
Suen

WHAT:
Fope Cadillac bracelet

HOW MUCH:
From RM39,900

Sometimes, the smallest detail makes the biggest impression. This limited-edition bracelet from Suen, made in collaboration with Italian jeweller Fope, is the perfect example. Crafted in 18-carat gold and set with four sparkling Cadillac-cut diamonds, it carries the exclusive Suen 15 mark, adding a touch of distinction to your jewellery collection. Thanks to Fope's patented Flex'it technology, the bracelet moves effortlessly with you, offering the comfort of everyday wear while radiating subtle grandeur. Style it with understated studs and a sleek clutch for modern minimalism, or pair it with vivid jewels for a more lavish display. This anniversary piece adapts effortlessly to whatever the day (or night) demands, embodying timeless sophistication with fresh, modern ease.

Smashing fashion

123RF



BY LILIAN TAN

Last month, Goldman Sachs assured us that "despite concerns about widespread job losses, AI adoption is expected to have only a modest and relatively temporary impact on employment levels".

Be that as it may, unemployment fears are real, and waning recruitment confidence has adversely affected luxury fashion retail. After the pandemic, queues formed outside luxury boutiques in major capitals around the world as consumers embarked on revenge spending sprees. Malaysia was no different, with luxury sales recording a staggering year-on-year growth of 40% in 2022, followed by a surge of 70% in 2023. But, then, 2024 marked a dramatic reversal in the luxury market, and the slide has continued, with our fashion sector recording an 8% sales decline in the second quarter of 2025.

According to fashion marketing analysts, unemployment fears may not directly change one's fashion choices, but employees are apt to adopt a more conservative and professional dress code in an attempt to appear more reliable to employers. Where pre-pandemic office wear reflected individualism and creativity, the fear of losing one's job is nudging employees to avoid non-conformist or attention-grabbing styles and instead favour classic business attire to demonstrate frugality, conformity and professionalism. HR might not issue a memo asking the staff to dress down, but many are now ticking off conformity, punctuality and working extra hours as indicators of an employee's worthiness, loyalty and a keenness to do more to keep one's job.

The forecast is not all dull and drab, however, as fashion has always found room to manoeuvre even within tightening constraints, as the trends for autumn 2025 show that the appreciation for sustainable fashion, utility chic, athleisure and gender-fluid styles has grown. Putting to rest ultra-quiet luxury, designers have challenged themselves to still surprise.

Calling it "eclectic minimalism", brands such as Prada are showing that subtle tweaks, including oddball layering, smart asymmetry and slightly exaggerated proportions, can turn familiar staples into showstoppers, and preppy basics can be uplifted with a cheeky twist on the classics. Thus, a high-neck jacket, layered skirt or button-downs, relaced jacket or draped top can elevate one's existing wardrobe and still not break any rules.

Need inspiration on layering tips? Check out the runways at Miu Miu, Bally and Polo Ralph Lauren. The challenge, *Vogue* tells us, is to find new, fresh ways to wear and rewear the conventional and familiar with a personalised twist, because the interesting thing about clothes this season is how they are worn as well.

Colour is also providing a refreshing respite in a season traditionally dominated by a safe palette of browns and greys. Purple, the colour of the season, matches well with white, black, red and blue, so it is easy to style and splash on for a touch of glamour. For the more adventurous, offbeat colour pairings are also in: A startling flash of purple might be just the foil for pale pinks, pistachio greens and icy blues.

Meanwhile, many Gen Z or Zoomers who have gone off conventional career paths to become digital nomads, gig workers or to pursue artisanal baking or walking dogs are embracing bohemian chic. For them, key items would include flowing chiffon blouses, knits layered over maxi skirts and rich embroidered jackets, accessorised with flat footwear, low-slung belts and cord necklaces. Having flown the coop, they dress to please nobody but themselves.

But, then, which global fashion trends do we anticipate will make landfall in Malaysia? My bet is that the country's rekindled enthusiasm for badminton, after our spectacular wins in the recent World Badminton Championships, will impact our fashion choices.

Last week, six pieces of JW Anderson open-collar casual Uniqlo badminton print short-sleeve shirt were snapped up on eBay for US$35 (RM148). But this is just the start. Many young women who are already wearing mini tees over short skirts and shorts would thrill to Shein's plunging V-neck white short badminton dress with trimmed sleeves and hem retailing at RM77. Similarly, one should check out the skirts and skorts, paired with sneakers, sports socks, headbands and wristbands from Decathlon and Sports Direct.

Anyway, badminton fashion goes well with our sweltering hot weather: blending style with functionality and allowing for ease, comfort and agility. Uniqlo should launch a special badminton series since it already dominates the athleisure category with its "Sports Utility Wear" by offering high functionality such as stretchability, breathability and quick-dry elements to wick away perspiration, cool and regulate body temperature to guarantee comfort and versatility.

As for badminton merchandise, the potential is massive, and I am not talking only about players and the number of fans who have been inspired by our doubles champions to take up the sport. With our national badminton teams booked to play the Thomas Cup and Uber Cup in the first quarter of 2026, badminton fever will rouse patriotic pride to a fever pitch as Malaysian fans brace themselves for an action-packed 10 days in Forum Horsens, Denmark. Even those who did not fly the Jalur Gemilang on Merdeka Day will now want one when they cheer themselves hoarse, togged up in their caps, headbands and T-shirts. After the World Badminton Championships, the Thomas Cup and Uber Cup are without question the second most prestigious badminton event in the world. So, if our entrepreneurs are not already rallying to capitalise on the mania, they really ought to. E



SASKIA LAWAKS/ LVMH

My work on tailored items and suits won't change, of course, but now I realise that I need to expand my brand and vision. I need to access more people.

— Soshi Otsuki, the Japanese designer behind menswear label Soshiotsuki, after winning the 2025 LVMH Prize. Drawing inspiration from Japan's Bubble Era of the late 1980s, he aims to keep evolving and focuses on more casual pieces next.

Jonathan is inspiring to me as a designer because of how he tells stories with his collections and the playfulness and originality he injects into every collection



DIOR

— Oscar-winning actress Mikey Madison on being named the new global ambassador for Dior, marking the first such appointment under creative director Jonathan Anderson

Placing my own stamp on this is going to be the most important part of this success. There has to be a noticeable shift that makes this mine.



JEFF HENRIKSON/VOGUE

— Chloe Malle assumes one of fashion's most prominent roles as head of editorial content for US *Vogue*, following Anna Wintour's footsteps after her remarkable 37-year tenure as editor-in-chief. Among her first bold moves is reshaping *Vogue*'s publishing rhythm: retiring the traditional monthly cycle for fewer, more purposeful print issues.



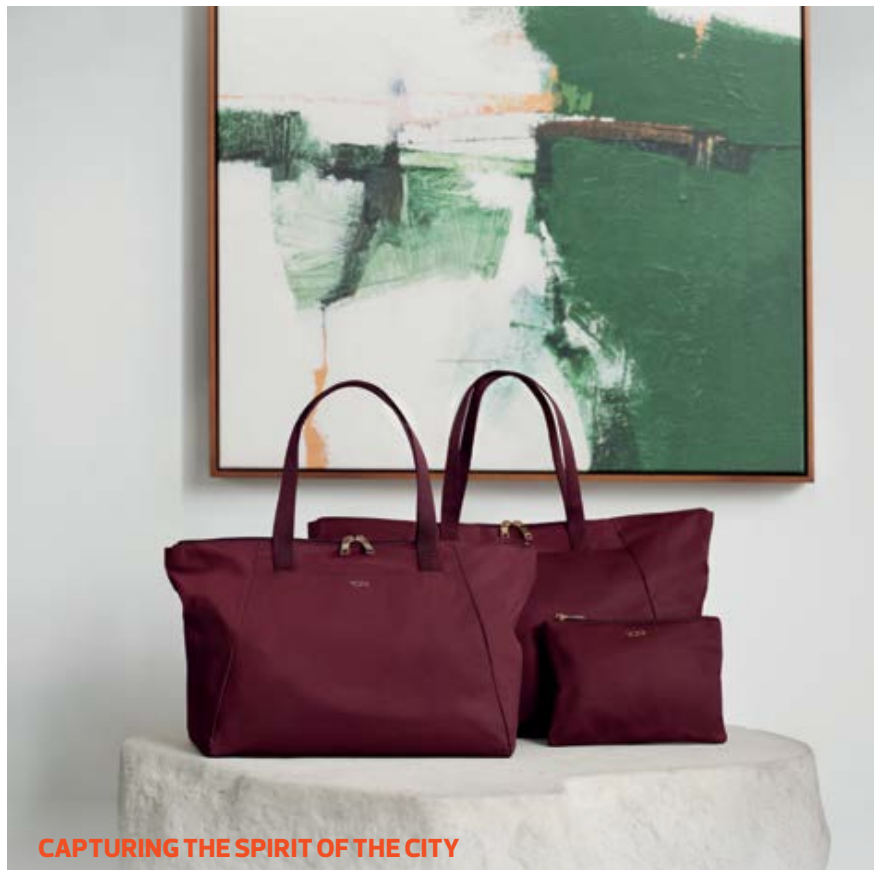
GEM OF A TIMEPIECE

Audemars Piguet marks its 150th anniversary by unveiling three striking new interpretations of its 38mm Code 11.59 Selfwinding Flying Tourbillon. Celebrating the maison's heritage with stone dials (a design language first explored in the 1960s), the latest trio balances technical mastery with natural beauty.

Available in vivid ruby root, deep blue sodalite and rich green malachite, each dial is paired with a case in 18-carat white, pink or yellow gold. Beyond their luminous appeal, these gemstones are steeped in symbolism: ruby root for vitality, sodalite for clarity, and malachite for transformation. No two dials are identical, their veining and texture ensuring every watch is a singular piece of art.

At its heart beats the ultra-thin Calibre 2968, a self-winding flying tourbillon movement measuring just 3.4mm thick, usually reserved for larger watches. Its titanium tourbillon cage with peripheral drive achieves both lightness and precision, while the open architecture allows the complication to seemingly float above the vibrant stones. Matching leather straps complete the look, with colour-coordinated rubber-coated options available.

This launch not only reinforces Audemars Piguet's commitment to making high complications more versatile and expressive, but also underlines its ability to infuse emotional resonance into horology. Intertwining beauty and innovation, this timepiece is as much a talisman as it is a technical marvel.



CAPTURING THE SPIRIT OF THE CITY

Celebrating its 50th anniversary, Tumi launches its Fall 2025 collection with a bold nod to New York City, the metropolis that inspires with its restless energy and resilient spirit. This season, the travel and lifestyle brand brings fresh interpretations to its signature lines while expanding offerings for both men and women.

The Alpha, Alpha Bravo and Voyageur collections take on the "Poster Print", a playful homage to the torn wild postings scattered across Manhattan's streets. Alpha Bravo also arrives in a sleek Navy Coated Canvas and commuter-ready silhouettes such as the Surveillance Flap Backpack and Roadstead Messenger.

Meanwhile, the automotive-inspired Arrivé series gets a contemporary polish with carbon-fibre accents and magnetic zipper garages, spotlighting the sophisticated Arrivé Large Backpack and Hannover Slim Brief.

For women, the new Olas and Agent lines showcase versatility through clean lines and refined hardware, designed to complement the rhythm of daily life. Tumi's bestselling Just In Case totes are refreshed with graffiti-inspired graphics and various sizes, while the Voyageur collection introduces seasonal hues such as Mink, Tumi Red and Wine.

The iconic 19 Degree collection also returns in autumnal shades of Pavement, Wine and Moonrock. A standout is the 19 Degree Aluminum Bar Set, a luxurious lifestyle piece crafted with the luggage maker's iconic contours, complete with cocktail-making essentials. This Fall 2025 release embodies Tumi's enduring ethos of functionality elevated by design, made for those who thrive in life on the move.

REMEMBERING GIORGIO ARMANI

"Elegance is not about being noticed; it's about being remembered" — few words capture Giorgio Armani's philosophy better. This month, the fashion world fell silent at the passing of the visionary designer at 91, a man who reshaped modern elegance with quiet conviction. His legacy endures in the refined minimalism of soft-structured suits, the very essence of "stealth wealth" that became his identity.

His unstructured tailoring in the 1970s redefined power dressing, replacing rigid suits with soft lines that allowed the body to move freely. Suddenly, executives, actors and style icons embraced a new kind of class — one that spoke softly but carried undeniable authority. Hollywood became a commanding stage for his vision, from *American Gigolo* to countless red carpets, cementing Armani as the arbiter of understated sophistication.

But his reach extended beyond fashion. Armani defined the vocabulary of modern luxury, spanning architecture, hospitality, sports and even perfume. He proved minimalism could be magnetic; subtlety could command attention; and true style transcends trends.

In a final poetic moment, Armani reflected in his last interview with *Financial Times* that his sole regret was investing time in work rather than with loved ones, a reminder of the rich humanity behind the maestro. His passing drew thousands to Milan's Armani Teatro, where mourners paid homage in solemn tribute, while a private funeral honoured him in his hometown village of Rivalta.

To this day, designers still echo his philosophy, and wearers instinctively reach for pieces that embody his ethos of clean lines. Moncler chairman and CEO Remo Ruffini said: "Ever since I was a kid, I looked up to him as a role model, a guide. He was the symbol of what I dreamt of, the point of reference for anyone who loved this world. His consistency, elegance and ability to look ahead with clarity and courage marked an era and set a path. He was what so many would have liked to be, and what no one will ever truly be able to match. An example that will stay with us forever."

Giorgio Armani was not just a designer; he was a cultural architect, whose work altered the fabric of modern elegance forever. Though his passing leaves a void in the industry he helped shape, his influence continues to ripple across the fashion world and beyond. With an innate ability to distil glamour into its purest form, Armani revolutionised how we perceive luxury — not as pretentiousness but as effortless confidence.

— Compiled by Puteri Inarah



REUTERS



Sofia Richie Grainge in a striped pant and robe set

Pyjama party

Wearing nightwear in the daytime has never been more embraced than now, but should we be leaning into this trend or is it time to put it to rest?

BY GENIE LEONG

While some of us might view hitting the sack as just another part of everyday life, it has always enjoyed a prominent and romanticised role in society. From fairy tales Snow White and Princess and the Pea, to common phrases like "beauty sleep", getting your snooze on — or more accurately, the fateful events that might occur in relation to it or the benefits you reap from a full eight hours — is usually approached with a generally positive and even wishful tone, especially as more of us struggle to get enough of it and covet being properly rested.

Fashion has been playing on these concepts for years. Who could forget Viktor & Rolf's 2005 Bedtime Stories collection, with sleeping beauties tucked in between satin covers, hair fanned out across cushion-shaped headpieces? Or the quilted coats evoking vintage duvets for Alexander McQueen's Fall 2016 ready-to-wear line, cocooning the body as if the wearer had just left the sanctuary of the boudoir. Three years later, Moncler and Simone Rocha created a line of shapeless puffer ponchos complete with hoods and fanciful ribbon ties. As the models wandered around the woodland-inspired set, the reference to sleeping bags became obvious.

Avant-garde interpretations have been more apparent in recent times. Maison Margiela's Fall 2018 couture presentation included a bizarre, extravagant look featuring layers of a printed quilt pattern, tulle, feathers and an attached striped bolster. Guests at Caroline Hu's Spring 2024 show gasped at the sight of two twin gowns with gigantic lace-edged pillows sculpted to peek from folds of draping, only to be further stunned by a jaw-droppingly voluminous number covered in so many fluffy pillows that had the model slipped and tumbled on the catwalk — you would wonder how she might get back on her feet unassisted. And that's just scratching the surface. If we wanted to talk about *all* the high fashion examples over the years, we would be here all day.



Skims, Kim Kardashian's loungewear label, tapped K-pop star Rosé as the face of its 2025 Valentine's Day campaign



Caroline Hu Spring 2024 RTW

In the normal world though, where there is no glitter or spotlight to simulate glamour, there was a time when wearing pyjamas anywhere but to bed would quickly place you into the category of slob. If everyone else is taking the time to get ready before heading out the door each day, so should you. All clothing must be spotless, modest and well-fitted. Bonus points if you did your hair and makeup — no one wants to see slumber lingering in your eyes and skin. Despite the enduring popularity of #IWokeUpLikeThis, it is hardly an excuse for looking like you *actually* just rolled out of bed.



Brands like New York-based Salter House are styling nightgowns for the outdoors



Moncler x Simone Rocha Fall 2019 RTW

Then, in 2020, while most of the world was in the depths of lockdowns, a curious social media trend emerged — fashion creators wearing pillows as "dresses", positioned over the body and cinched with a belt to create the hourglass figure of a traditional frock. Obviously, this would never work as an actual outfit, but its message was clear — dressing up just to linger around the house didn't make sense, but with a little creativity, sleepwear and even bedding could become just as fun and chic. This perfectly coincided with the revival of naughties fashion and a surge in demand for vintage slip gowns, camisoles and lingerie. And people wore these out, usually layered with higher coverage pieces for a more modest final product.

Today, hybrid work has emphasised a need for comfortable clothing that is durable and versatile enough to work harder than the wearers themselves. Coordinated loungewear and pyjamas now have trims and prints so cute it would be a shame if the outside world never saw them. Even styles that are not necessarily designed for sleep but are cosy enough for it — think lightweight linen pants with drawstring waists or basic tees constructed from high-quality materials — are experiencing upticks in sales and visibility. Niche and high-street brands alike are marketing nighties for any setting but the bedroom. In the end, you can always add a fancier shoe or some jewellery to make these pieces work for a night out with friends or casual coffee meet, right? You're probably heading straight home afterwards anyway, so why do a full change?

But this raises several questions, namely where do we draw the line between acceptable and inappropriate, cool and plain lazy? Just because your workplace does not enforce a strict dress code, is it okay to roll out of bed, look at yourself in the mirror while still in your PJs and think, "Oh I can just throw on a blazer, some heels and call it a day"?

The truth of the matter is, it is a luxury to be able to be so dressed down on a daily basis. It means you have the flexibility and freedom to not have to wear blue-collar uniforms or their starched white-collar counterparts every morning. Not everyone is allowed to work from home, sprawled out on the couch in between answering emails, or can clock out early to take a nap. In a world where the average person works more than they play, getting a good night's sleep (or just looking like you have) is a luxury not many can afford.

Certain dress rules also have their purposes, be it for safety or reducing distractions that might hinder productivity, and ignoring them not only demonstrates a blatant disregard for others in your surroundings but also a shallow understanding of the occasion you are attending. Having different clothes for day and night helps separate the activities in your daily routine and prevents everything from blending into one never-ending loop determined by sentiments of nonchalance and "Who cares?".

Comfort should always be a priority when shopping for new wardrobe additions. Clothing that is tight and structured, made from unforgiving textiles or festooned with embellishments might have that wow factor but can be more fussy and annoying than they are worth. Here, pyjama-inspired pieces that apply the textures and silhouettes associated with sleepwear can offer a solution without compromising on style, and put-together loungewear is always handy to have in-closet for relaxing at home with loved ones, easy errand days or travelling. Having strong discernment about when, where and how to don these items is key to mastering the trend tastefully. Perhaps not the radical conclusion you were hoping for, but true nonetheless. E



Viktor & Rolf Fall 2005 RTW

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Fit for a Queen

The largest and most comprehensive exhibition documenting Queen Elizabeth II's fashion is set to be held in 2026, marking the centenary of her birth in style. Literally.

BY DIANA KHOO

Royalists around the world are all aflutter already over news that the centenary of Queen Elizabeth II's birth is set to be marked by the largest-ever exhibition of her fashion. To be aptly held at The King's Gallery at Buckingham Palace, *Queen Elizabeth II: Her Life in Style* is touted to be remarkably comprehensive, displaying approximately 200 different items, half of which are said to be exhibited for the first time.

Naturally, as Britain's longest-reigning monarch (until her death on Sept 8, 2022, she had ruled for 70 years and 214 days), expect the royal wardrobe to reflect likewise. The extensive archive of clothes had been in the care of the Royal Collection Trust and they felt a sartorial tribute to the late queen's style would be perfect on the occasion of what would have been the centenary of her birth.

Scheduled to run from spring to autumn next year, the exhibition will display iconic dresses and evening gowns worn during key public events as well as off-duty looks on the rare occasions when Her Majesty was not working or touring; this would be primarily during her sacrosanct Scottish summers at Balmoral. Archive photographs would always capture her in one of her beloved tweedy, equestrian looks, featuring tartan skirts, jodhpurs and Argyle knits, waxed jackets or quilted vests by Barbour, and almost always accessorised with an Hermès headscarf, tied jauntily under her chin.

Meticulously curated, the showcase will encompass articles of clothing worn throughout her life: from baby princess to queen regnant. For example, the silver lamé bridesmaid dress the young Princess Elizabeth wore, aged eight, for the 1934 wedding of her uncle, the Duke of Kent, to Princess Marina of Greece, will be shown for the first time. Designed by Edward Molyneux, a favourite among royals and stars like Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich and Vivien Leigh, it remains one of the earlier surviving pieces of couture from her childhood wardrobe.

Those with a sharp eye would appreciate the exquisite detailing on the 1953 white satin coronation gown by Norman Hartnell, adorned with all four emblems representing the countries of the UK — the Tudor rose (England), the thistle (Scotland), the leek (Wales) and the shamrock (Ireland) — as well as other flowers of the Commonwealth countries such as the maple leaf (Canada), wattle flower (Australia), silver fern (New Zealand), protea (South Africa) and lotus (India). It was said that design work took eight months to complete, including research and the sheer amount of intricate embroidery needed.

The queen's 1947 wedding dress, also by Hartnell, is another highlight. For those who care to remember, the wedding was held not long after the Second Great War, when England was rebuilding itself after the long, hard years. Ever frugal and conscientious, the young princess had to save up clothing ration coupons to obtain enough satin for her bridal dress.

Reports state how the British public, upon hearing that the young princess was not exempt from the strict austerity measures, even with regards to a royal wedding looming, began pooling and sending clothing ration coupons to the palace. However, it was illegal to transfer ration coupons and all were said to have been returned, complete with a thank you note. Once enough material had been obtained, a team of over 300 women, working steadily for nearly two months, brought Hartnell's vision to life.

There are also fashions that serve as both adornment and diplomatic tools, such as the 1961 green-and-white ball gown, especially created for the queen to wear to a state banquet in Karachi, Pakistan. The dress subtly but powerfully honoured the country's national colours through an emerald green pleat cascading down the back as well as matching emerald accents at the shoulders.

Besides Hartnell, creations by other favoured British designers, including Sir Hardy Amies and Ian Thomas, who designed the famous blue chiffon dress the queen wore to the 1981 summer wedding of her eldest son Prince Charles to Lady Diana Spencer, will also be featured.

What cannot be seen with the naked eye, however, are the touches and eagle-eyed attention to detail that ensured the queen was always the picture of perfect propriety, without a single incident of wardrobe malfunction ever taking place. Milliners, for example, would be guided by a royal brief on the size of hat brims so the monarch could always be seen by her people, while seamstresses would weigh hems down to foil even the sneakiest sudden gust of wind.

Queen Elizabeth II might be known more for her long, distinguished reign and statesmanship but judging from the buzz the upcoming exhibition is already generating, power and presence can also be conveyed through the softness of fabric and the thoughtfulness of fashion design. E

***Queen Elizabeth II: Her Life in Style* will be held at The King's Gallery, Buckingham Palace, London, from spring to autumn 2026**

PAUL FAITH/POOL VIA BLOOMBERG NEWS



Striking in red following the Royal Monday Service in Armagh, Northern Ireland



A smart hat, bejewelled accessory and handbag (a favourite was Launer) was a signature ensemble



Lace and flowers soften this skirt-suit look



Gloves are almost always worn — for fashion as well as utilitarian purposes

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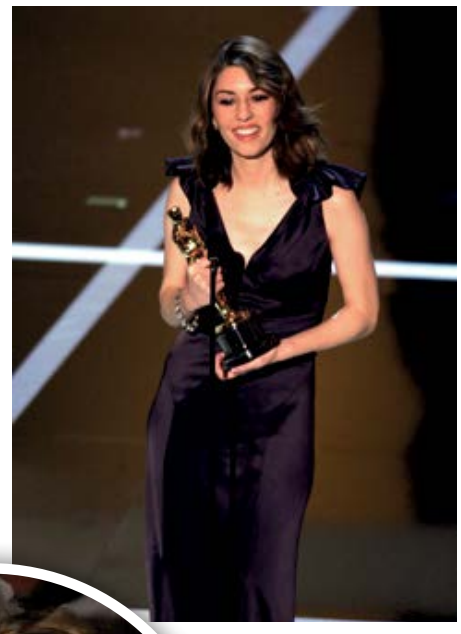
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Coppola receiving her Oscar for *Lost in Translation* in a Marc Jacobs dress

On the Marc

Sofia Coppola's first fashion documentary reveals the artistry behind one of the industry's most influential designers and a friendship woven across decades



The best friends at the designer's 2003 Christmas party

BY KONG WAI YENG

In 1990s downtown New York, where most connections dissolved with the next trend, certain friendships took on the quality of myth. Sofia Coppola and Marc Jacobs found each other not merely as collaborators but kindred spirits, their lives unfolding in adjacent vocabularies of style. Both were young when the city hummed with a kind of nervy glamour as loft parties stretched until dawn and fashion shows crackled with rebellion.

She, the daughter of Hollywood aristocracy, was the cinéaste of restraint, discovering poetry in pauses and the languor of girls leaning against walls. He, who adopted and discarded numerous avatars, was giving shape to what was yet unvoiced. They gravitated towards each other as if characters from the same script, each recognising in the other a similarity amid the noise. Their bond was so rare and resilient that, 30 years on, Coppola would turn her lens on Jacobs with a documentary that also offers an insider's glance into their unique relationship.

The two officially met when Coppola asked her mother if she could attend the Perry Ellis show that Jacobs was preparing in 1992. Rather than honouring the brand's roots in practical American elegance, the provocateur chose to pay homage to Seattle's vibrant grunge scene, sending out models who looked as if they had wandered in from a record store on St Mark's. Flannel shirts, army boots and slip dresses worn with deliberate indifference unsettled the establishment, even riling Kurt Cobain and Courtney Love who, wary of grunge being co-opted by luxury, reportedly burned the samples Jacobs had sent them. While the industry recoiled and critics railed — British fashion journalist Suzy Menkes among the loudest — high-profile admirers began to emerge in support. Gianni Versace called it "fresh and very New York". Coppola named it "an epiphany".

Those lucky enough to catch *Marc by Sofia* (cheekily referencing the Marc by Marc Jacobs fashion line) at the recent Venice Film Festival would have found the answer to a perennial question: Did the grunge uproar cause Jacobs' sacking from Perry Ellis? Coppola puts it to him directly. He says it did not, though he admits he likes that version of the story anyway.



Models walking the runway of Marc Jacobs' spring ready-to-wear show in 2024

If the visual biography begins as a chronicle about clothes, it soon reveals itself as a study of temperament. Jacobs, now 62, is no longer the *enfant terrible* who once rattled Perry Ellis but a figure tempered by time, as evidenced by his 16-year tenure as creative director at Louis Vuitton — a reign that established the now-familiar paradox of running a personal label while presiding over the vast machinery of a large European house. The film is loosely framed around the coming together of a collection, as Coppola shadows him through the making of his 2024 spring ready-to-wear line, her camera registering the conviction with which he sketches, edits and refines. "I have faith that it will become something," he remarks, with the calm of a veteran who has weathered too many storms to panic at the sight of clouds.

What viewers come to realise, too, is that Jacobs is deeply shaped by cinematic epics, particularly *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant*, the 1972 chamber piece by German director Rainer Werner Fassbinder; the *Big Spender* number from *Sweet Charity*; and the louche Mrs Robinson, embodied by Anne Bancroft in *The Graduate*. Coppola weaves in clips from *Cabaret*, *All That Jazz* and *Petra von Kant*, as well as footage of Dame Elizabeth Rosemond Taylor opposite Montgomery Clift, and Barbra Streisand in *Hello, Dolly!* At one point, she asks Jacobs why all queer men adore Streisand. He replies, unflinchingly, that he is fascinated by women who are caricatures of themselves, who lean into their own trademarks so fully they become both real and theatrical.



The duo promoting their film at the Venice Film Festival 2025

Geniuses and superheroes tend to be orphans of sorts, and people will learn about Jacobs' painful childhood. The primal wound inflicted early — a father lost when he was seven and a mother's struggle with mental illness — left him with a heightened instinct for self-protection. His grandma, with whom he lived as a teenager, became the steadying presence, instilling a reverence for beautiful clothes through knitting and needlepoint. Later, close confidantes helped him navigate the more vulnerable moments of his career. Coppola and her brother would drop by his home, where he lounged in silk pyjamas, to talk him through the uneasy aftermath of a scandal or show. His other close friend, filmmaker Lana Wachowski, calls these sessions a "post-art-um".

Fashion has long been fertile ground for documentaries: Douglas Keeve's *Unzipped* (1995) caught Isaac Mizrahi in the throes of creative panic; *The September Issue* (2009) staged the forever clash between Anna Wintour and Grace Coddington; and Frédéric Tcheng's *Dior and I* (2014) captured Raf Simons's nerve-wracking debut at Dior. These accounts lay bare the pressure and drama but few move beyond portraiture into something truly personal. *Marc by Sofia* seeks to be earnest rather than performative, striving to be less an exposé than a conversation carried across decades. Early reviewers have labelled it a perfect manifesto of friendship, a phrase that seems apt not only for its subject but also structure.

Only a true companion, not a mere observer, could have known where to linger, when to step back and how to draw out truths too fragile for strangers to touch. This stems from a long-standing partnership: Coppola's heroines, with the studied nonchalance of someone aware of being seen, seemed dressed by Jacobs; and his runways were often haunted by her characters. Over the years, the exchanges multiplied: Coppola accepted her Oscar in a Jacobs gown, directed his Daisy perfume commercial and worked with him on a line of Louis Vuitton handbags. The archive is crowded with proof: backstage snapshots, Met Galas, after-parties, dinners and birthdays. Even Coppola's daughter Romy has drafted the designer into her TikToks, where he slipped easily into the frame as if part of the family.

"It's always scary to make something — you're figuring it out as you go. I just wanted to show a sincere depiction of Marc — I wanted it to feel personal, never intrusive or prying, but to share things that I know about him," the director said in a magazine interview last month, reflecting on the approach of probing the inner life of her closest friend.

Coppola may appear in the film sparingly but beneath the fabric, frou-frou and fantasy runs the simplest thread: two artists choosing each other, again and again, through every season of change. *Marc by Sofia* makes its case quietly but unmistakably — that friendship, too, can be a work of art. E



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FASHION EVENTS around the world

COMPILED BY AIREENA AZNI



FRANCE

Virgil Abloh: The Codes

Sept 30 to Oct 10
Grand Palais, Paris
grandpalais.fr

Founder of Italian luxury brand Off-White and the first African American to take the helm at industry giant Louis Vuitton, the late Virgil Abloh was a force to be reckoned with. Although recognised as one of the 21st century's most influential figures in fashion, his works extended beyond designing clothes and dressing up A-listers — the multi-disciplinary creator had made his mark across arts, culture, music, architecture and entrepreneurship. To commemorate his vast contributions and achievements across two decades, the Virgil Abloh Archive, in partnership with Nike, will be holding *Virgil Abloh: The Codes* at the Grand Palais, the first major exhibition organised in Europe to honour the visionary since his passing in 2021. Curated by Chloe and Mahfuz Sultan, the presentation will open on Abloh's birthday, Sept 30, showcasing hundreds of objects, prototypes, sketches and images from his career, as well as his personal collections and library, allowing visitors to discover his creative process and design principles.

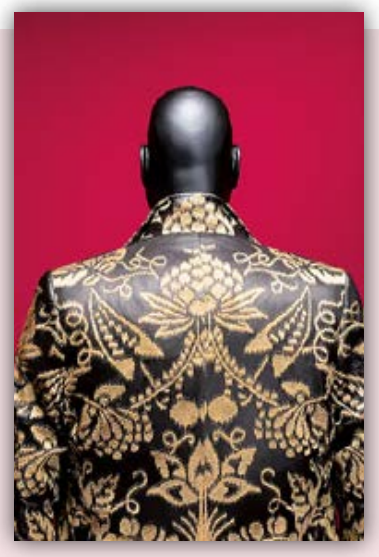


THE UK

Marie Antoinette Style

Sept 20 to March 22, 2026
Victoria and Albert Museum
vam.ac.uk

For the first time, London's esteemed institution Victoria and Albert Museum will be hosting an exhibition that traces the life and legacy of Marie Antoinette, the last queen of France, who reigned for two decades before the French Revolution and establishment of the French First Republic. The flamboyant monarch captivated the world with her distinctive approach to fashion and interior design — many remember this controversial 18th-century regal figure by her elaborate gowns and towering headdresses — and she left behind a lingering influence that infiltrated every level of society. Sponsored by shoemaker Manolo Blahnik, this show offers a closer look at about 250 objects such as paintings depicting the queen's collection of sumptuous garments, selections of silk shoes, an assemblage of exquisite jewels including a replica of one that tainted her reputation as well as contemporary oeuvres created as a nod to the fashion icon's timeless appeal. There will also be furniture and home decor items on display.



THE US

André Leon Talley: Style is Forever

Oct 15 to March 1, 2026
SCAD Museum of Art
scadmoa.org

The SCAD Museum of Art is dedicating two of its spaces in Savannah and Atlanta, Georgia, the US, for *André Leon Talley: Style is Forever*, a commemorative show that pays homage to the enduring legacy of the distinguished editor, cultural icon as well as beloved mentor and friend of the Savannah College of Art and Design. Talley's story is one of grit, grace and perseverance. From growing up in a racist neighbourhood in North Carolina with his grandmother, who instilled in him the importance of dressing well, Talley went on to become an apprentice at The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute, before launching his publishing career at *Interview* magazine and eventually rising to the top echelon, alongside Anna Wintour at *Vogue*. This exhibition gathers 70 looks from Talley's personal collection, including ready-to-wear, couture and bespoke pieces, highlighting some of his most memorable moments, from prestigious Met Galas and front rows to more intimate occasions and celebrations.



ITALY

Giorgio Armani Privé 2005–2025, Twenty Years of Haute Couture

Until Dec 28
Armani/Silos, Milano, Italy
armanisilos.com

As the world mourns the death of Giorgio Armani, fashion aficionados and loyal followers can head to the Armani/Silos museum in Milan to explore the legendary designer's works, values and style codes as a way to reminiscence about his remarkable presence in the creative sphere. First staged in Paris in 2005, *Giorgio Armani Privé 2005-2025, Twenty Years of Haute Couture* zooms into refined lines, precious materials and techniques, as well as jewel-like embroideries that add delicate details to Armani's graceful creations. Visitors are invited to observe a carefully curated collection of elegant numbers up close, to appreciate their craftsmanship that reflects the refined Italian quality. The four-storey building has been transformed into a sensory space, providing guests an immersive experience through colours, forms, sounds and fragrance. The garments are cleverly enhanced by a diffused scent called Bois d'Encens, emblem of the Armani/Privé Haute Couture Fragrances line, and each room is enlivened by an original soundtrack composed especially for the exhibition.



JAPAN

Art Deco and Fashion: Centering on the Kyoto Costume Institute Collection

From Oct 11 to Jan 25, 2026
Mitsubishi Ichigokan Museum, Tokyo
mimt.jp

Defined by sleek lines, geometric shapes, bold patterns, vibrant shades and varied luxurious materials, Art Deco was popularised in the early 20th century and has since influenced the works of many creatives across industries such as architecture, interiors and fashion. For three months, this decorative style will be adorning Mitsubishi Ichigokan Museum in the heart of Tokyo from early October. *Art Deco and Fashion* examines the aesthetic's elements on selected dresses from the Kyoto Costume Institute, featuring garments by Coco Chanel, Doeuillet, Zimmermann and Madeleine Vionnet, each cut from fine fabrics in bright colours and embellished with dazzling details. Besides the clothes, accessories, graphic works, prints and art objects from other Japanese and international museum archives are also presented, offering visitors a comprehensive lesson on worldwide history. One of the brilliant attractions is an assortment of jewelled heels from around 1925, which became a huge phenomenon when it was finally acceptable for Western women to expose their calves.



INDIA

Serpenti Infinito

Oct 1 to 17
Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre, Mumbai
bulgari.com

After occupying cultural spaces in Shanghai and Seoul earlier this year to stage the *Serpenti Infinito*, Roman jeweller Bvlgari is bringing the immersive experience to Mumbai, continuing the maison's extravagant celebrations for the Year of the Snake, which honours the powerful creature that has been its celebrated emblem since 1948. For this third edition, Bvlgari will take over the Art House at the Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre to present its Heritage, High Jewelry and Contemporary collections via three central themes: Rebirth, Transform and Evolution. The treasure troves are thoughtfully arranged throughout the building, offering guests a seamless journey into the captivating Serpenti universe. Bvlgari CEO Jean-Christophe Babin says India has always been an enduring source of inspiration for the house. Curated by art gallery Nature Morte and envisioned by artistic director Sean Anderson, the exhibition also features contemporary installations, sculptures and artworks by renowned Indian and international artists who have translated the Serpenti's metamorphic and fascinating nature into their unique works.



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FLAIR + FROST

The arrival of chilly winds has inspired designers to return to style staples for this year's Autumn/Winter runways. Striking the perfect balance between glamour and grit, the shows paraded luxurious lace, dazzling sequins and knotted accessories, while classics such as extravagant animal prints and functional puffers continue to dominate the scene.

COMPILED BY LEE CHARMYNN + PUTERI INARAH



Zimmermann

Saint Laurent

Chloé

Alexander McQueen

Lana Del Rey in Valentino

SHEER INTENTIONS

Long associated with bridalwear and boudoir, lace is no longer confined to delicate trim. The transparent textile is reinterpreted through layering and stark fabric pairings — Chloé and Zimmermann offset it with silk for an ethereal combination. Embracing flowy silhouettes, the loose drapery offers modesty without sacrificing sensuality, lending the beloved boho chic trend an extension beyond summer. Meanwhile, Alexander McQueen and Saint Laurent experiment with high-neck blouses, darker palettes and jewel tones, exuding Gothic allure with structure and spunk. Equally elegant and daring, the sheer material proves adaptable in all forms. A standout example is Lana Del Rey, who wore a custom Valentino gown during her recent tour in the UK and Ireland. Her appearance in the gown, made from gold Chantilly lace, was labelled by fans and the brand itself as her "princess moment".

KNOT TOO SHABBY

Finishing details can take an outfit to the next level. Some may reach for a statement necklace or flashy earrings, but a neat fabric bow can do the job just as well. In the case of Chanel, it has opted for six, arranged as an elegant shrug. Versace keeps things classy with a sleek black pussy-bow blouse, while Dries Van Noten's piece sports muted colours and a stiffer loop. Taking the phrase "go big or go home" quite literally is Givenchy, accentuating a wide-shouldered coat with a voluminous scarf. Dior takes things down a notch with style, having dressed British actor Josh O'Connor for the premiere of *Wake Up Dead Man: A Knives Out Mystery* at the 50th Toronto International Film Festival. He wore a no-frills suit and chequered shirt, completed with a cravat and pale pink bowtie for a pop of colour.



Versace



Chanel



Givenchy



Josh O'Connor in Dior



Dries Van Noten



Michael Kors

Elie Saab

Gemma Chan in Armani Privé

Rabanne

Tory Burch

TWINKLE IN YOUR EYE

Flapper dresses of the Roaring Twenties boasted no end of sequins, catching the light as their wearers took to the dance floor. Years later, these shiny little discs are still used to add glitz to everyday pieces. A formal brown coat from Tory Burch goes from office essential to a girl's night companion with some crimson sequins. Michael Kors adds texture to a simple dress with a half-bedazzled skirt, while Elie Saab pairs a fluffy, moss-ball-like tube top with a strapless jumpsuit. Rabanne is no stranger to using these embellishments, as seen in its two-layered skirt sporting tulle on the lower half to soften but not diminish its shine. Jumping on the glittering bandwagon is Armani Privé, styling Gemma Chan in a classy frock, its bodice decorated with botanical motifs, for the 82nd Venice Film Festival.

ON THE PROWL

Camouflage is one of the most remarkable traits in the animal kingdom: Cuttlefish change colour to hide among corals; stick insects wobble unseen in bushes; and big cats — striped tigers and spotted jaguars — sneak about among tall grasses. The exotic nature of feline pelts has been replicated time and again throughout fashion, mostly on luxurious coats as seen on Dolce & Gabbana's lengthy, casual garment and Balmain's refined take. Louis Vuitton cleverly blends its Monogram flowers into the spots of its runway piece, and Roberto Cavalli pairs a patterned silk shirt and matching jacket with scarlet pants and jewellery, channelling the energy of the animal it draws inspiration from. No less opulent is Wales Bonner's 2025 Met Gala outfit for American singer Omar Apollo: a leopard print vest hand embroidered with glass beads and Swarovski crystals under a wool mohair tailcoat.



Omar Apollo in Wales Bonner

Balmain



Louis Vuitton



Dolce & Gabbana

Roberto Cavalli

PADDED POWER

As temperatures drop, the puffer jacket steps into the spotlight, transcending its utilitarian origins to become a fixture in men's wardrobe. Designers expand on the language of outerwear by playing with volume, shape and proportion. Despite monochrome tones, Issey Miyake and 3.Paradis attract attention with unique constructions that blend comfort and couture — the former experimenting with quilt-like geometry and the latter interpreting the padded overcoat as pillowy bunches. For those drawn to patterns, Yohji Yamamoto's chequered garment strikes a balance between rugged and refined, while Romeo Beckham channels streetwear flair in Dingyun Zhang's earthy-toned number. Another popular version is the puffer vest, as seen at Balenciaga, where it reasserts dominance in athleisure.



Issey Miyake



Yohji Yamamoto



Balenciaga

Romeo Beckham in Dingyun Zhang



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Photographer | Eric Chow
Hair stylist | Keith Ong
Makeup artist | Rachel @ Plika Makeup
Model | Claudia Rosie



Cape in black fantasy wool tweed, embellished with white-and-gold braid and jewelled buttons by **Chanel**

CHAPTER

CHANGING ROOM

Is it the end of an era at *Vogue* or the start of something new? As Anna Wintour steps aside as editor-in-chief, we reflect on how she shaped an entire industry.

BY RUBIN KHOO

In the documentary *In Vogue: The Editor's Eye*, released in conjunction with *Vogue*'s 120th anniversary, Anna Wintour says in the opening scene that she makes it a point to not celebrate anniversaries, stating "that one should always look forward rather than backwards". That is perhaps most relevant now as she moves on from her role as editor-in-chief (EIC) of *US Vogue* — a position she has held for nearly four decades — to focus on her position as *Vogue*'s global editorial director as well as chief content creator for Condé Nast.

Netizens were quick to react, declaring it the "end of an era", but it seems — as is usually the case — they got it wrong. *The Business of Fashion* described her moving away from the role as "not the end" but an "elevation", reflecting the expansion of her duties at Condé Nast, which has her overseeing all the titles at the organisation, including *GQ* and *Vanity Fair*, the only exception being *The New Yorker*.

"Anna is still in her office and is very much the boss," says a publisher of *Vogue* from the region. "She is the global director, so the editors of *Vogue* from all over the world report to her."

That includes Chloe Malle, who was named head of editorial content for the American edition, often referred to as "Big *Vogue*", on Sept 2. In an interview with *The New York Times*, during which she outlined her strategy, Malle stated unequivocally that, "the truth is that nobody is going to replace Anna". Nonetheless, all eyes will be on her first issue, which is set to hit the stands next year.

Much like the way Wintour redefined *Vogue* upon assuming the position, it seems that Malle too will chart the future of the American edition — her own way. During the interview, Malle hinted at the possibility of a reduced number of print editions and focusing only on collectibles or special editions.

"We all look at print as something that is collectible, something you might want to archive and hold onto," agrees Wintour, during a recent interview with *The New Yorker*. "I think it also has to represent a news-breaking moment. You need a reason to put somebody on the cover for any of the stories you might be running inside. That it has to be more important, substantial, separate from the day-to-day news-breaking stories."

When the announcement came that Wintour would no longer hold the position of EIC, the accolades were swift and abundant from industry players and observers who pointed to her many firsts as *Vogue* editor. Yet, in her interview, Wintour points out that her influence was confined solely to print with a scattering of events, compared to Malle, who now has numerous platforms to reach her audience.

In 1988, upon assuming the editorial helm at *Vogue*, Wintour set the tone for her stewardship with a cover that was unlike the pretty girls with the perfect hair who, till then, had adorned *Vogue*. Her debut featured a model showcasing a US$50 pair of jeans, worn with a US$10,000 Christian Lacroix sweater. The printer was convinced it was a mistake as it departed so significantly from what *Vogue* represented till then.

When criticised for supposedly abandoning traditional *Vogue* readers for a younger audience, the reply was typically Wintour and non-apologetic: "Sure, but I haven't met a woman yet who wants to look old."

"What stands out to me most is her leadership style," says Gilbert Cheah, the APAC Ambassador for US *Vogue*'s Vogue 100 Community. The Vogue 100 comprises a select group of creative voices from the globe that range from actors and artists to athletes and activists. "She's decisive but also open to different views, seeking out people with strong perspectives and giving them the space to do their best work."

Cheah's admiration for Wintour goes back to the 1990s when he was living in New York and she had already established her iconic status.

"She's always been an inspiration and role model to me," he says, "so meeting and eventually working with her was especially meaningful."

Wintour's decisiveness is something New York-based Malaysian designer Zang Toi knows only too well. He was featured by *Vogue* as one of four new faces in the March 1990 issue. As a fledgling young designer, Zang apparently sent out photocopies of his sketches to various publications, including to *Vogue* where Wintour was also relatively new in her position. Captivated by what she saw, she was quick to remove another designer, making way for him.

"It was a dream-like experience to be the very first Asian designer championed by Anna Wintour," he says. The feature followed his second collection for spring 1990. "Anna Wintour has a great eye when it comes to spotting new talent and is not afraid to promote it with lightning speed."

His appearance in *Vogue* gave him the stamp he needed to mark his entry into the fashion scene. Her decision to feature him, he believes, was not about presenting a diverse line-up but was driven solely by her belief in him.

Zang believes that his story could happen again today because it was driven by talent. "It was about talent rather than diversity for her at that point of her career," he says.

"She has a remarkable eye, having helped launch the careers of countless designers, photographers and creatives, and their gratitude and loyalty are part of why her influence has lasted so long," says Cheah.

Datuk Seri Dr Farah Khan, founder and president of The Melium Group, believes that Wintour succeeded in transforming *Vogue* into more than just a fashion magazine.

CONTINUES ON PAGE 34



Cat-eye sunglasses by **Chanel**;
accessories by **Swarovski**;
and floral print dress by **Dolce & Gabbana**.
Leopard print faux fur coat in recycled polyester,
available exclusively online and at **Coach** Pavilion KL

Short jacket in red, pink, black and white fantasy tweed, embellished with braid and jewelled buttons; necklace in metal and resin; gloves in red, pink, white and black fantasy tweed and red leather; 11.12 bag in red, pink, black and white fantasy tweed and metal, all by **Chanel**.





FROM PAGE 30

"She made it a cultural authority, connecting fashion with art, politics, entertainment and society," she states. "She has always had a gift for identifying talent early and placing designers, photographers and models onto a global stage. That shaped the way we all view fashion, as not only clothes but as storytelling and influence."

"Anna has that unique talent of combining fashion and cultural moments," concurs Zang. "She was the first to tap into the Bright Lights, Big City moment in New York that was about capitalism, featuring big, bright and bold colourful fashion that replaced the quieter and neutral-coloured fashions championed by the Armani era."

Her vision consistently pushes fashion into broader cultural relevance, states Cheah. "She was the one who brought the stars of the film, music, sports and even political worlds into fashion's orbit, elevating both sides in the process. And, of course, she transformed the Met Gala into the world's most prestigious red carpet event, a cultural moment in its own right."

For designer Alia Bastamam, the term editor does not quite capture the extent of Wintour's influence at *Vogue*.

"She redefined what fashion means to the world," she says. "She turned it into a cultural language and a global business, making fashion far more accessible."

Alia has been featured in *Vogue* Singapore, including having her design worn by Yuna on the cover. From Wintour, she has learnt the importance of turning passion into something sustainable and profitable.

"That has taught me to not only immerse myself in design and aesthetics, but to also be committed to the business of fashion, where creativity and commerce fuel each other."

For Farah, a significant aspect of Wintour's ability to combine fashion with storytelling provides the impetus for broader conversations — from history to diversity to celebrity culture.

This is, perhaps, best exemplified by the Met Gala themes that capture a worldwide audience, the latest being Superfine: Tailoring Black Style, which took place earlier this year. The exhibition honoured Black Dandyism, used to describe men who approached aesthetics as a lifestyle, attitude and a form of self-assurance. For the Black community, the term was used positively to encapsulate people and their ambitions.

"To me it is about education, it is about liberation, it is about joy and it is about the self-respect that is given to yourself by dressing well and dressing with style, humour and wit," said Wintour when interviewed during the event.

The exhibition comes five years after *Vogue* and its EIC were criticised for a lack of diversity at the height of the Black Lives Matter movement. The theme has been described as Wintour's promise to address the lack of diversity that had occurred at *Vogue*.

"I want to say plainly that I know *Vogue* has not found enough ways to elevate and give space to black editors, writers, photographers, designers and other creators. We have made mistakes too, publishing images or stories that have been hurtful or intolerant. I take full responsibility for those mistakes."

And as the hype grows for the sequel to *The Devil Wears Prada*, the film that immortalised her so-called authoritarian leadership style, much was also written about the apparently tyrannical way in which she ran *Vogue* upon her stepping down. Some accounts of these have become legendary.

In the book *How to Lose Friends and Alienate People*, author Toby Young recounts a scene in which the EIC of *Vogue* trips on her Manolos and falls smack in front of an intern. The intern, who had been instructed NEVER to speak to the editor, reacts by calmly stepping over her as if nothing had happened, before dashing down the corridor.

When asked about *The Devil Wears Prada* at a forum for students at Oxford, Wintour responds to depictions in the film as "highly amusing", and that it is always an "honour to be played by Meryl Streep".

At the same forum, she was asked whether leaders should be feared or loved, to which she replied succinctly: "Both."

"She's much warmer and more approachable than people might expect," says Cheah. "That so-called intimidating aura has more to do with her celebrity than with who she really is."

"Today, authority and power can feel like unfashionable concepts," says Alia. "But in her hands, they defined an era. Her decades of leadership truly shaped what fashion has become on a global scale."

It is this authority combined with vision, adds Alia, that set the standard for fashion, not just culturally and commercially, but also in the worlds of art, film, music and even politics.

It was under her leadership, reminds Cheah, that *Vogue* moved swiftly into digital spaces, building its platforms on YouTube and Instagram into major successes, while its publication still retained its authority.

Farah, who like Wintour, is often referred to as one of fashion's most influential women, says that it is Wintour's discipline and decisiveness that she takes inspiration from.

"They are legendary," she states. "I've learnt that clarity of vision is power. Once she believes in something — a designer, a cause, a point of view — she firmly stands behind it."

Contrary to public perception, Cheah says Wintour is not one to micromanage. Instead, she "provides clarity, sets direction, and then trusts her team, which fosters both accountability and creativity".

There is also her ability to balance tradition with change.

"She keeps the aura of *Vogue* yet constantly reinvents it for new generations. That balance is something every leader must master." On a personal level, Farah adds, "I've admired her ability to create cultural moments that extend beyond fashion, that's something I bring into my own work."

The extent of Wintour's influence is perhaps better reflected in her current role as chief content creator for Condé Nast as well as her continued leadership of the Met Gala as it also takes into account the business side of publishing.

"She has transformed the Met Gala into the most important annual fashion event in the world, merging creativity, philanthropy and business," says Farah, reflecting on the impact that Wintour has had on the creative industry. "She has proved that editorial vision and business strategy must co-exist. Under her leadership, *Vogue* became a platform, a brand and an engine for cultural influence. Her model showed that in today's creative industries, you cannot separate artistry from commerce — the two must amplify each other."

In her interview with *The New Yorker*, Wintour declared the time was right for her to step away from the EIC role. "It seemed like a good moment to bring in someone with a different perspective from a different generation who could look at things in a new way."

For Farah, Wintour is "The Architect of Modern Fashion Culture", a title that is unlikely to be filled by another, particularly as influence today is dispersed across social media and digital platforms.

"For me, working with her and the Vogue 100 team has been incredibly fulfilling," says Cheah. "Anna Wintour is much more than a fashion leader; she's someone who has shaped the way we see, consume and appreciate style and culture today."

"There won't be another Anna," says Farah. "I doubt there will be a single editor with Anna's dominance but there are leaders who shape fashion in new ways, across new mediums. There will be other icons, each with their own language of influence. What remains is the need for curation, authority and vision. The form may change, but the role of tastemakers — whether through print, digital or experiences — will always be necessary." E



Two-piece top and skirt ensemble (RM18,500) by **Fiziwoo Couture**; accessories by **Swarovski**. Faux fur coat, stylist's own.


GIOR
ORA

Short flared dress in beige horsehair-effect linen blend and black lace (POA) and Lady Dior in cannage embroidery satin with beads, all by **Dior**

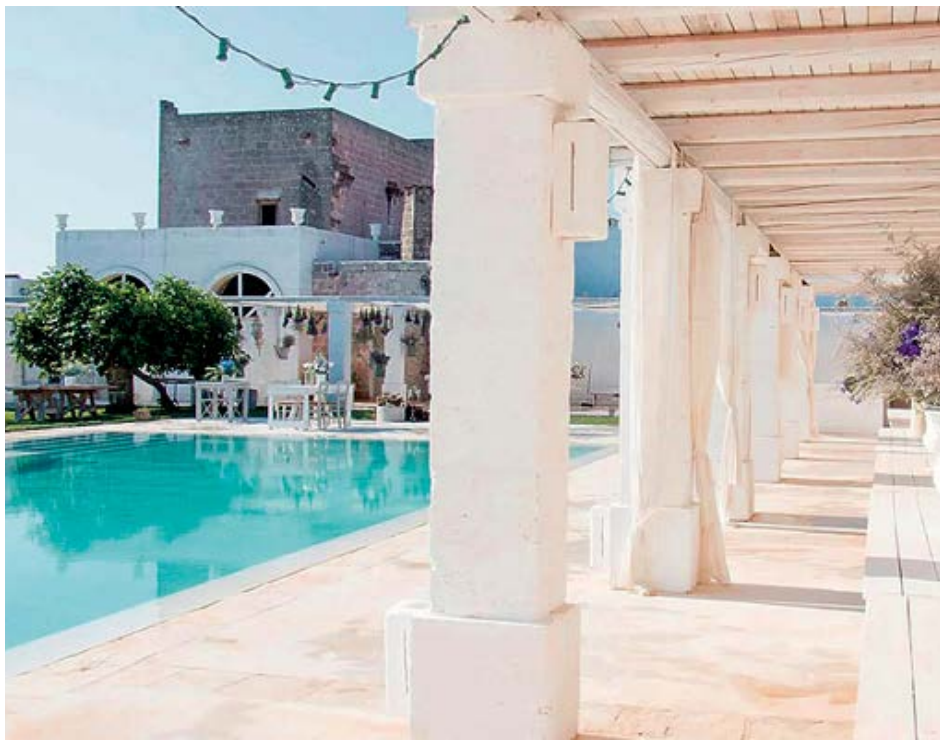
THAT'S AMORE

Balancing work, life and fashion comes easily to Cheng May Koh-Tommasino, who is growing her loungewear label Cara Mia May from a historic *masseria* in the heart of Puglia, Italy



BY DIANA KHOO

Perhaps it is ingrained in their nature, or the gods themselves ordained it by physically shaping the country to resemble a high-heeled boot, but Italy has always been a land of style. And while Milan is the de facto national capital of fashion and luxury, the rest of the country must not be discounted, not least the region where the "heel" specifically is located. Known as Puglia (or Apulia to the English speakers), it is mainly prime agricultural territory, thick with ancient olive groves and a land planted with all manner of good things, from artichokes to tomatoes that literally taste of the sun, fava beans and durum wheat. In fact, Puglia's nickname of "Italy's breadbasket" is justifiably well-earned and the origin of the famous ear-shaped pasta called *orecchiette* is proudly Pugliese.



The *masseria* has an inviting infinity pool — perfect for hot afternoons



Cheng May Koh-Tommasino

La dolce vita

Somewhere in Manduria, facing the Ionian Sea, is the Masseria Potenti. The *masseria* (a traditional fortified rural farmhouse) is located on a 150ha estate that Malaysian-born Cheng May Koh-Tommasino, the founder of luxury loungewear label Cara Mia May, now calls home. Married to Walter Tommasino, whose family owns the estate, May, as she prefers to be called, first visited in 2018.

"It was December when I arrived," she says. "There was a towering 3m tall Christmas tree and we had just finished a festive seafood dinner shared with a big Italian family. Turning in for the night, I found a pair of vintage pyjamas my mother-in-law had left for me, tucked under my pillow. Along with candles, a wreath and a cosy fireplace making the room softly glow, these were ways of making me feel at home, a tradition she continues to this day."

On her brand's poetic name, May explains, "It means 'my beloved May' in Italian. Tucked within the pyjamas was a folded handwritten note that read, '*Cara mia* May, I hope you feel at home'. Those words touched my heart — they were few and simple but are forever imprinted in my memory with feelings of comfort and warmth from my love's family. This reflects my brand ethos: to cherish warm feelings of love and joy derived from vintage pieces of rare beauty."

A lifelong lover of beautiful clothes, as most women are, May says her relationship with fashion deepened after discovering the circular economy. "Fast fashion is so destructive," she says. "To me, true style is timeless, not seasonal. Vintage pieces, especially handmade, hand-embellished ones, carry stories and soul. That is why a pair of Cara Mia May pyjamas would not look out of place whether worn in the 1970s or tomorrow. That is the beauty of clothing that transcends trends and why Cara Mia May is completely focused on upcycling deadstock and vintage fabrics, while our main collections are made-to-order in small batches. It is slow fashion: conscious, deliberate, honouring the past while creating for the future."

A globetrotter at heart, May has lived in Los Angeles, Tokyo, Singapore and London prior to Puglia. "Each city helped shape me," she muses. "In LA, I interned in the entertainment industry after my studies in California. Summers were spent with my aunt and uncle in Tokyo, where I fell in love with Japanese food and culture. Singapore was where I built my career in e-commerce over nearly a decade. London was where our son was born and my brand took shape. Each city added to my palette of influences — cultures, colours and textures — which I now draw from to be included in my work."

Birthing the brand

Apart from fashion, May is also a passionate dancer and certified yogi, always captivated by a gentler, more mindful way of life. "I worked in tech, advising clients for years. But alongside that, I felt a pull towards something more personal and fulfilling.



Masseria Potenti's original settlements date back to the late 11th century

I knew I wanted a business where creativity wasn't an afterthought but at the heart of everything."

Covid-19 proved to be the unexpected catalyst. Locked down in Puglia, away from their tiny London apartment, May and her husband got used to being away from the rat race, revelling in the beauty and fresh air of the Italian countryside. "Walter's family had bought the *masseria* in 2003. It was in ruins and they slowly rebuilt it with love into a working farm and *agriturismo* property. The days were definitely slower and I often lounged in vintage pyjamas, which then sparked an idea: Why not recreate the elegance of this relaxed clothing using traditional craftsmanship?"

As corporate life grew increasingly stressful, May discovered what started as a passion project showed her the path to live and breathe what she truly loved. "I began collaborating with a fourth-generation family tailor, developing prototypes inspired by my travels and adorned with embroidery. That was how the seeds of Cara Mia May were first planted."

Under May's care and guidance, her vintage *pigiamino* label has since grown to include pearl jewellery and home furnishings, such as serving plates and ceramic dining sets, vintage silk table cloths, table runners and hand-poured candles. "The brand has become a little lifestyle universe — an homage to artisan workshops, traditional techniques and the essence of Puglia. Our ceramics are also central to the lifestyle — used in long lunches and dinner parties, sparking conversations, laughter and togetherness, besides becoming keepsakes that can be passed down for generations."

Moda life

Given Puglia's climate, linen is understandably the preferred fabric. "In Malaysia, I lean into batik and you'll find me in a batik cheongsam every Chinese New Year," says May. "But in Puglia, it's all about linen. I wear it in all styles — button-down shirts or dresses with bell or balloon sleeves. I also wear my vintage embroidered pyjamas as day dresses; they look great against sun-kissed skin. Once I even decided to weave my heritage into my creations by designing a limited-edition batik crop top with pyjama pants which are perfect for summers in Puglia."

And in line with Pugliese style, which May proclaims as effortless, understated and full of character, fashion here is rooted in tradition, not trends. "The way of dressing here is about decency, age- and lifestyle-appropriateness — a gentle and elegant expression of self, over overt sexiness," she points out. "My mother-in-law is my style icon and she embodies this approach to dressing perfectly. She would drape a vintage kimono over simple wide-legged pants and a top, and always finish with a pair of statement earrings. I must add how jewellery is never a secondary consideration here. Grandmothers pass down vintage pearls and gold bracelets, heirlooms that continue to be worn with pride. I have been lucky to have received a few of these gifts myself."





Rest, play or picnic in an olive grove



May also hosts regular yoga retreats at Masseria Potenti





Charming vintage-style *pigiamino* by Cara Mia May

Those wishing to purchase Cara Mia May pyjamas or book a farmhouse stay can visit caramiamay.com or masseriapotenti.it respectively

Those charmed by the world of Cara Mia May can, in fact, choose to fully immerse themselves in a slice of May's life. She hosts regular weeklong yoga retreats at Masseria Potenti as well as two new properties the family have added to their portfolio. One is a 1960s beach house where barefoot living is de rigueur, the other a 16th-century monastery in Nardò, steeped in silence and history.

"We think, together, they embody Puglia's different facets: rustic, coastal and spiritual," says May. "Beyond mere clothing, Cara Mia May has become experiential. Through my retreats, guests may immerse themselves in slow living, take part in craft workshops like ceramic-making or basket-weaving, or even join in on pyjama parties that round up the event. My vision is to share the soul of Puglia with the world — through tangible products as well as lived experiences."

Guests who come to stay at Masseria Potenti would invariably find their days easily adjusting to the slow rhythm of the Italian countryside. Mornings would start with a table heaving with freshly baked *ciambella* breakfast cakes and cooked eggs — they are laid fresh by happy, free-range hens. As wheat is grown in the region, expect an abundance of delicious baked goods, namely a basket of local *friselle* — ring-shaped, twice-baked bread — best enjoyed by, first, rehydrating it with water before further anointing with olive oil, salt, tomatoes and fresh basil. Afternoons call for a swim in the sea (a perfect balm for spirit and soul) while evenings see the tambourines being brought out so lessons of vigorous *pizzica* and *tarantella* dances can commence.

For those who simply must venture beyond the *masseria* walls, May suggests visiting a few local stalls for a spot of retail therapy. "Markets are my happy place. In London, you would find me at Portobello and Golborne Road on Fridays while in Manduria, the local vintage market on Tuesdays is my go-to. Some of my most treasured finds have come from these hunts, including my wedding dress from the 1930s and a sequined 1920s gown."

Her recommendations are Nicola Fasano Ceramics in Grottaglie; Officine Silentio in the historic heart of Ostuni; Vico dei Bolognesi, a concept store focusing on unique desirables from all over the world in Lecce; TulsiShop, which has at least four outlets in Puglia and whose owner Deborah Nolan personally sources items directly from villages in Mexico, markets in India, Thailand, Africa and Vietnam, or directly from local artisans, craftsmen and weavers; and Orsina à at the Coccaro Beach Club in the fishing village of Savelletri. "And then, of course, you have Masseria Potenti's own vintage shop where I pick many dresses for weddings and parties," smiles May. "The farmhouse is definitely home for us now and we have recently completed a villa here as well. Every summer, friends come to visit and it really feels like the heart of our lives here in Puglia." E

Formidable five

In 2025, the year of Malaysia's Asean chairmanship, there is no better time to celebrate the region's diverse ethnic communities and cutting-edge style. Get to know five designers from the original Asean quintet, whose cool and meaningful designs remind us of Southeast Asia's position as a birthplace for visionary creatives.

BY GENIE LEONG + QUINCY TAN

Huntilanak, Malaysia

Dipping your toe in Southeast Asian culture is nearly impossible to do without a brush with the region's folklore. Mythical beasts have been etched on our artefacts and in our minds for generations through legends, tales and cinema. Some of these creatures are depicted as bad omens or demonic entities that prey on innocent humans, while others are benevolent spirits that guide and protect mortals.

Just as one might wear a talisman engraved with a motif of these protective beings, Huntilanak's viral monster jackets are designed to empower wearers, making them feel watched over and inspiring confidence. Handcrafted by designer and ESMOD Kuala Lumpur graduate Ryan Tan, the horned and fanged denim façades seem to melt out of the back of the pieces, roaring at passersby as if to say: "Look but do not touch — or, at least, ask before you do".

The inspiration for these came unexpectedly while Tan was travelling through Bali, Indonesia, where ornate traditional masks caught his eye. "I was fascinated by how they were not just decorative — they served as a form of protection, whether spiritual or symbolic. I thought it would be really interesting to translate that idea into fashion," he recalls.

Huntilanak (a portmanteau of Kuntilanak, the vengeful female spirit better known as Pontianak in Malaysia, and the slang endearment term "hunty" meaning "honey") has always been Tan's platform to incorporate regional cultural influences in his designs. In the brand's earlier days in 2021, it was best known for modern daywear constructed from repurposed *songket*. The creator's goal was to envision the typically ceremonial fabric outside its normal settings.



Fearsome monsters adorn the back of these jackets

"*Songket* is usually reserved for formal or traditional wear. I wanted to modernise it, push it into silhouettes and contexts you wouldn't normally see and show that our textiles can live beyond special occasions," he says.

While modernising traditional styles and materials is often the subject of criticism, particularly when it comes to orientalism and appropriation, Tan believes that innovating is key to keeping our culture breathing in an era when it is being lost to time or tokenised. "To me, the best way to preserve culture is to keep it in motion, not lock it away. I love shaping these fabrics into silhouettes and contexts they have never been in before — distressing *songket*, mixing tribal weaves with unconventional shapes — so they feel alive. My advice? Learn the history, techniques and symbolism first, then don't be afraid to twist it."

In August, he and his team had their first-ever runway show at Kuala Lumpur Fashion Week. Named Britney, the collection was the meeting point of Huntilanak's key aesthetic elements over the years. Models sauntered down the catwalk wearing milky contact lenses for a possessed yet eerily beautiful glam moment, dressed in boxy cuts, corset-style tops and baggy bottoms. Among the highlights was a *songket* jacket and pant set boasting the iridescent colours you would find on the surface of soap bubbles, which Tan notes was tedious to blend; the stone grey finale look that comprised a sweeping maxi skirt and monstrous face with protruding teeth and a snaking tongue; and a jacket made in collaboration with local artist Silas (@robotinpyjamas on Instagram), who engineered a textured fabric with real crystals embedded in the threads.

The presentation was a milestone that most designers can only dream of. Coming off this success, Tan found a new calling in his work — to uplift other homegrown artists who deserve visibility. "Silas, for example, is an incredibly talented artist, but his style isn't the commonly popular or commercially safe choice here. I felt strongly about helping to elevate his work, not just to give him exposure but to show people that our creative scene is richer and more diverse than they might expect."

He adds that things like stronger media support, collaboration and grants can help indie designers and students pursue their passions. But he also knows that such aid is slow to come in a market dominated by safer, conservative aesthetics. While going against the grain can be challenging, he urges others with their own distinctive styles to continue dreaming big and sharpening their talents. "I hope to see more cultural risk-taking, reimagining of traditional textiles and designers building their own spaces instead of waiting for approval. The most exciting thing is when someone's work feels so specific to them, you can't mistake it for anyone else's." (@huntilanak)



Prismatic tones make this ensemble a showstopper



Tan celebrating with the models backstage



This lace bustier dress is hauntingly beautiful

Fassbender & Mellon Collie, Singapore

You could say that at the heart of all art forms lies a desire to challenge norms and go against the grain — a hunger to dream, yell and speak your mind boldly in an act of rebellion against conformity. These contrasting ideals clash harshly when it comes to fashion, dividing society between those who appreciate the simplicity and "flawlessness" of manufactured styles and the disruptors seeking a more raw, emotive form of expression.

For instance, the signature kaleidoscopic tie-dye of Singaporean indie label Fassbender & Mellon Collie is captivating to some but an eyesore to others. The strong reactions to the layers of swirling colours and prints, usually done on repurposed pieces using ice and various dyes, were the impetus for owner and designer Ethan Lee. This vibrant look blurs the lines between beautiful and ugly, reimagining the natural wear and tear of old clothing as something that can still be alluring.

"The ethos of Fassbender & Mellon Collie, as well as how the brand was built, was heavily influenced by the idea of letting go and allowing things to be. The designs come naturally with the way the clothes are tied along with the ice that I use to disperse the dyes on the fabrics. We've always believed in wearing and living in your clothes — every hole, stain and fade on them tells a story," he says.

The brand began five years ago on an Instagram page where Lee documented his creative pursuits, from moody photography to experimental dye jobs. It was not long before London-based streetwear label AFFXWRKS (the company born out of a pirate radio show headed by design industry trailblazers Michael Kopelman, Taro Ray, Stephen Mann and Kiko Kostadinov) took notice and commissioned him to rework a small batch of its Advance Pant. The highly successful collaboration opened the founder's eyes to the demand for his audacious designs and pushed him to establish Fassbender & Mellon Collie as a proper business.

In the beginning, Lee only accepted custom requests. Clients would bring in their own pieces or he would source some second-hand material. In more recent times, however, he has put out small collections of one-off designs and is fashioning a line of small-production original garments. "I work with Dylan, a friend of mine who is a tailor with Three Buttons, to draft patterns. We then get these produced locally with the help of a seamstress," he says.

As Fassbender & Mellon Collie is a one-man show for the most part and the dyeing process is time consuming (each article of clothing is individually made and Lee has "yet to find a way to scale up production"), the brand used to sell mainly on social media and its website. Over time, it has come to supply local retailers with a limited number of products — a key step for small businesses looking to improve sales and gain more traction — and is striving to stocking those overseas. He also hopes to participate more frequently in bigger projects like the capsule collection made in partnership with Dover Street Market Singapore, which launched in February.

While it is the aspiration of many young designers to achieve viral recognition, Lee is pleased with what Fassbender & Mellon Collie has evolved into and is proud of being a part of Singapore's tiny but mighty subversive fashion community. Building brick by brick at a steady pace enables him to stay true to his original mission — to create freely. "I'm not keen on support from institutions or government bodies. The market here is small and I'd like to think our target audience is quite niche, but we're happy with the way it is."

In the country's bustling metropolitan landscape, where diluting one's style can feel like an easy way to blend in and avoid unwanted attention, Lee's trippy looks invite people to get in touch with the world around them, form their own opinions and be unafraid of conveying their thoughts. "I believe fashion, art, music, politics, films, memes and more are intertwined," he says. "For example, the political state of a country can affect how people express themselves, be it through their art forms or the way they dress. People should know what is happening in the world!" (@fassbenderandmelloncollie)



Rusty shades of orange are punctuated by splashes of denim blue on this long-sleeved top with a cybersigilism motif



Lee



Dye powder is sprinkled over ice, which leaves organic patterns on the fabric as it melts



Due to the nature of Lee's process, no two pieces are exactly the same

Gongdid Design, Thailand


GD273 organza dress in blue


GD223 spandex maxi see-through dress


Pleats add whimsy to scarves and handbags


Gongdid's Spring/Summer 2025 Journey collection

Many success stories begin along the lines of spinning an accidental mistake into something meaningful, but few might be as quirky as why Thai designer Peach Wichcha Soponpattana decided to create pleated garments. "The pronunciation of 'pleats' is quite similar to my name, Peach," she explains, a resemblance that often resulted in others incorrectly saying the folded fabric when calling for her as a child. "My attention was therefore always drawn to them. I found them so captivating. Whenever I saw a woman wearing pleated clothing, it would instantly catch my eye."

For the founder of Gongdid Design, a clothing brand that is gaining widespread popularity for its airy aesthetic and contemporary approach to everyday womenswear, fashion was a far cry from her background in finance. "I started [the company] 10 years ago while still working at a securities firm. The word 'gongdid' comes from *kruang pan dai* in Thai, a traditional weaving machine used to prepare and wind thread before the weaving process. It signifies patience, craftsmanship and the beauty of making something from the very first thread — values that have been at the heart of Gongdid since day one."


Khun Peach

Her intentions were simple yet profound: "To produce designs that are approachable, comfortable and empowering — pieces that women can live, work and celebrate in." Peach wished to breathe new life into the textural pattern she fell in love with, detaching it from the local stereotype that it was commonly associated with older, more dated styles, and that only those of slim stature look good in them.

Breaking this cultural mould was admittedly difficult in the beginning. "To be honest, we didn't have many younger customers when we started. A major challenge has been standing out among so many players in the industry," says Peach. Her time, persistence and commitment eventually paid off though. "Now, our customer range is quite broad, and I enjoy seeing both younger and older clients — sometimes even mothers and daughters — shopping at Gongdid together and styling the pieces in completely different ways." While youthful interpretations work with fresh layering styles, the founder assures mature clients that they can feel beautiful and suited to their age wearing the same pieces.

With no formal training in the design field, Peach looked to her personal preferences and basic pieces that she wanted others to try and enjoy as a jumping off point. Learning from buyer feedback and using the reviews to develop new collections have helped her refine the business' offerings. "It's usually based on a concept or feeling I want to convey. Then, I explore silhouettes, movements and fabric qualities. I spend a lot of time testing pleat techniques on different materials to see how they react, to be both eye-catching and easy to wear," she says.

Apart from the visual appeal of the fabric, accessibility and inclusivity are instrumental to Peach's design approach. The flexible nature of pleats enables her creations to be truly "free size" without fitting awkwardly or compromising on wearability. "They are timeless yet incredibly dynamic. Pleats symbolise movement, adaptability and freedom. For me, they're not just a technique, but a language," she insists. Beyond the usual organza or spandex, new materials such as wool and synthetic leather make fascinating avenues for experimentation, expanding the possibilities of the iconic folds while keeping them relevant.

Rather than any distinct industry figureheads, Peach finds inspiration for her pieces from her travels and, as she grows and gains more experience, memories and feelings from her own life. Gongdid's Spring/Summer 2025 collection, comprising two volumes titled Origins & Echoes and Journey, focuses on the brand's ethos of joyful, modest and innocuous fundamentals that draw on nostalgia — effortless, casual shapes that embody timeless sophistication and contemporary comfort. The label also applies its signature soft pleats to a variety of accessories including bags, hats and scarves, and offers a small men's range. In addition to its main showroom in Bang Rak, Gongdid appears at several pop-ups in shopping malls Gaysorn Amarin and Siam Paragon.

As Gongdid continues to grow in reputation, Peach says, "I want the brand to have a stronger presence internationally, with more collaborations and concept spaces. But growth isn't just about scale, it's about keeping our designs relevant, maintaining high quality and preserving an authentic connection with our customers." (@gongdid.design)

TOTON, Indonesia

While knowing and chasing your true passion from the get-go can be admirable, there is undoubtedly something to be said about detouring through the scenic route — at least, that was the path Toton Januar, creative director of his eponymous fashion label Toton, went with. Born in Makassar, Indonesia, he took the long way round to the design world. "I was raised by a seamstress mother, but my father and grandfathers were all in the army," he says. "Growing up as an only child and son, I had quite a varied idea of what I was going to be when I grew up: an astronaut, fighter pilot, architect, just to name a few."

Neither military high school or engineering panned out, but Januar reminisces, "The one constant since I was a kid has always been my interest in arts and crafts. Not a day went by without drawing and watching my mother work. Through her, I learnt that everything has to go through a process. She has not only been a tremendous influence on the way I perceive fashion, but also life in general."

It was not until he moved to the capital city ("I was in a boyband and we were chasing our teenage fantasy," he divulges) and taking a gig as a model to pay for college that he made first contact with the fashion world. Between performing and modelling, and later becoming a designer's assistant, he affirms how formative those various perspectives were. "Those experiences helped me shape a full understanding of what fashion is, and that is not merely the clothing we put on our backs. I am grateful to have gone through all these twists and turns before committing to my true passion. Those times were invaluable."

In 2012, Januar established his fashion label alongside his partner Haryo Balitar with the intention of presenting Indonesian culture through a contemporary lens. Toton's ready-to-wear pieces are a modern rethinking of the country's sartorial traditions and techniques, combining ethnic fabrics and folk costume elements into androgynous silhouettes. The acclaimed brand has been exhibited and appeared in pop-ups across the world, winning the International Woolmark Prize Asia's womenswear category in 2016.

"Indonesia is in our DNA. We draw inspiration from its rich and diverse heritage, and it informs what we do," says the designer. "For example, I try to take something very traditional like embroidery, which is usually associated with formal evening wear, and turn it into something that would fit a modern woman's everyday closet." With 1,300 ethnic groups spread across 17,000 islands, Indonesia's sheer volume and variety of traditional garments and creative handicrafts


Januar with Pati, a street cat rescued from around the brand's studio

ZACARIAS 1925, the Philippines



Nazareno



Salagubang (Beetle) floor décor



Tati Sol bag



Clockwise from left: Nazareno, her late sister Cathy, great-grandmother Tadea, mother Vicky, grandmother Segundina and sister Marv

Rita Nazareno always knew she would return to Manila to continue the legacy of her grandmother. SC Vizcarra, named for her *lola* Segundina Cornejo Vizcarra, began its story a century ago and, thanks to the hard work and love of its matriarchal stewards, has evolved to offer not only artisanal hand-woven bags but uniquely creative contemporary interpretations of traditional craft through its offshoot — Zacarias 1925 — founded by third-generation successor Nazareno.

"In 1925, my grandmother opened her *taller de bordados de mano* (hand-embroidery studio) in Manila. SC Vizcarra was a pioneer in exquisite needlework of fine embroidery *piña*, a native pineapple fibre famous for its strength despite its delicateness. Her atelier transformed *piña* cloth into elegant trousseaus for the city's elite until the 1980s," says Nazareno of the brand's origins. At the time, her great-grandmother's (Segundina's mother) employer, a wealthy woman, was so impressed by Segundina's work that she gifted her PHP250 — a tidy sum back in the day — to start her own embroidery business.

"She was so resilient, talented and clever that she grew her little business and became the first Filipina to have a concession stand in the then US-run Clark Air Base." Nazareno's mother continued SC Vizcarra, eventually growing it into 13 stores across the Philippines, Guam and Hawaii, but fell on hard times in the early 1980s due to political upheaval. "My mother saw an opportunity to focus on continuing the tradition of producing finely crafted objects by focusing on hand-woven wicker and chair cane baskets and bags."

Prior to taking up the reins of the intergenerational enterprise, Nazareno, an Emmy Award-winning television creative services producer, had been pursuing a career in television in the US, her long-standing passion since childhood and a path she felt compelled to explore on her own terms before returning. "I came back to Manila in 2010 and set up Zacarias 1925 to put a more contemporary thrust on the tradition of hand-woven objects. I learnt so much and lived the life I had envisioned for myself [in the US]. But I knew I'd be back to continue what my mother and grandmother worked so hard for, the company that afforded me the chance to follow my dreams. Continuing this became another dream," she enthuses.

Her vision for Zacarias 1925 — named for her sculptor grandfather and the year the company began — stemmed from a desire to modernise the craft of basketry while preserving and innovating weaving techniques. "[Each piece] almost always starts with a point of personal interest for me — contemporary art, architecture, cinema, culture, be it a Jacques Tati film, Cy Twombly work or Janelle Monáe song. From there, I sketch it out and then work with our team at the workshop," says the creative director.

The brand is known for its quirky, colourful and even outright unusual bags and home accessories using wicker and leather: the blocky Mondrian-esque Tati Sol bag takes inspiration from the 1950s hard-edge painting movement, while the Architectonic collection's Cube bag suggests a playful take on geometric abstraction. Decorative items include woven bowling pins and cactus-shaped lamp stands, and even a stag beetle sculpture to spruce up the floor. "There's a playfulness to my designs, but also this seriousness in the intricacy of the weaves and forms. I think that's ultimately how I see life, a pursuit of joy coupled with a pursuit of meaning," says Nazareno.

Apart from her family business, she also teaches and holds talks at various institutions around the world, imparting the knowledge of good, lasting design to burgeoning talents. "The industry I am in is an immense driver of consumerism that is quite out of hand," she admits. "I tell my students they need to be making things that won't be in a landfill six months or a year from now. If you design something with an emotional connection, made with utmost respect for craft, then people will keep and hopefully pass it on." Nazareno is also co-creative director with Gabby Lichauco at the multidisciplinary studio Nazareno/Lichauco, which works on pieces such as panels, furniture and even a staircase for interior designers and architects.

In anticipation of SC Vizcarra's upcoming 100th anniversary, Nazareno expresses, "We are celebrating this milestone with a book and an exhibit next year. The family also has some plans in the near future for something that will solidify the legacy founded by my grandmother and transformed by my mum. I am absolutely so excited for it. I personally hope the lessons these strong women have passed on will continue to be shared with and enjoyed by future generations, and I look forward to where my nieces will take SC Vizcarra in the future." (@zacarias1925)

cannot be overstated. He hopes these can be translated into daily life, and that its artisans can continue to preserve and evolve their skills into a more complex form.

The vibrant street life and markets, particularly seeing the eclectic dress of the women there, are especially valuable sources of knowledge for him — studying the logic behind the Indonesian way of dressing and understanding its symbols preserve the essence of a culture, more so than indiscriminately applying batik motifs or specific embroidery, he insists.

Emotions and sentiment are Januar's starting points with each new creation, something especially pertinent to the Toton 2025 collection titled Puing. "[It] originated from a place of hopelessness and despair. Many troubling events seemed to be escalating in the world, mainly the genocide happening in Gaza, prompting me to enter a contemplative state and re-examine my purpose as a creative individual. The result was a somewhat sombre collection that felt almost ritualistic to me," he says.

With trends coming and going, and more companies striving to churn out cheap looks at breakneck speed, fashion can be a fast and merciless field. Building something that lasts is not always easy. "The thought of sustainability, ethical labour and animal-friendly practices has been on our minds for some time," says Januar, adding that it began with his Modernism themed line-up for the Dewi Fashion Knights segment of Jakarta Fashion Week 2017. With the environmental crisis in mind, the series incorporated unused denim and chambray clothes to be reworked into new pieces.

Toton continues to repurpose materials in its creations, notably the white upcycled lace garments that appear in most of its offerings. "We're trying to be kinder to the environment with our products, and hopefully, it takes us one step closer to being sustainable. We try to produce only what is necessary, and with thoughtful design and good quality in the hope that they will last to the next generation." The brand's 2026 collection is set to launch soon, and the founder says it will be participating in Jakarta Fashion Week in November. (@totonthelabel) E



Toton's Fall/Winter 2021 collection used a rip-and-stitch method to recycle unusued fabrics

Right: The 2025 Puing designs were a form of internal rumination for Januar



Circular economy chic

Mint Apparels, founded by two stylish Oxonians, is doing its bit to make luxury and designer fashion accessible and environmentally friendlier

BY DIANA KHOO



PATRICK GOH/THE EDGE

Mint Apparels' co-founder Tan Geoh Hwa wearing pre-loved Self-Portrait



A collector's-worthy The Beatles printed jacket by Stella McCartney

It is a good thing that the stigma surrounding pre-loved shopping is slowly but surely fading. While new is always nice, the advantages of shopping second-hand are boundless. Apart from the significant savings (a pre-loved item can be 20% to 80% cheaper than retail), there is also the chance of finding something rare and unique: a discontinued handbag from a covetable name, for example, or a past-season item no longer available on the market. Besides the economic benefits, buying pre-loved is clearly the smarter, more sustainable option as the lifespan of clothing and accessories is extended, not to mention being saved from an inglorious end in an already overflowing landfill.

"The perception of pre-loved remains a key factor. That is why we try to build up a community of 'converts' via physical events and social media," says Tan Geoh Hwa, 42, co-founder of Mint Apparels, alongside Tamara Lim. "We want people to see that pre-loved doesn't equate worn and torn. In fact, many items have only been used once or twice. Think of it as snapping up a beautiful car with very low mileage. It's the best deal — you get something that is of fantastic quality but without the high price tag!"

Occupying 850 sq ft of brightly lit space in Heritage House on trendy Jalan Yap Ah Shak, Kuala Lumpur, Mint Apparels is well laid out and filled with treasure for the savvy shopper. But let's be clear — a bargain bin it is not. In fact, what grabs your attention from the get-go is the hit line-up of the most desired brands. There is a Toolbox bag by Hermès in bright blue (a collector's item now that the model was discontinued in 2017), a lovely, nude-hued Chanel Coco Handle bag much beloved for its quilted design and structured top handle and, for those who like an edgier piece of arm candy, an iconic Balenciaga Motocross City bag in yellow calf leather. There are also designs from cult labels like Peter Pilotto, Isabel Marant, Dries van Noten and Malene Birger, along with the requisite Louboutin and Ferragamo heels and designer sunglasses to match.



The stylish and lovely duo make great frontwomen for the business, apart from an ample supply of brains. Both graduated from Oxford University: Tan read economics and management at Pembroke College while Lim chose Trinity for engineering. "It's a standing joke among Oxonians on how we are the worst dressed ever, with a fixed 'uniform' of sweatshirts and hoodies," laughs Tan. Asked which university was best known for stylish undergrads, both immediately chime, "LSE (London School of Economics)! Or, well, most of the London unis, for sure."

She adds, "We weren't all that far from Bicester Village and its outlet shopping diversions but, honestly, we only ever shopped on the high street. It didn't feel right blowing our parents' hard-earned money on designer togs. It was only after I started working in London — being single and free to go out every weekend — did I begin to buy nice clothes and start dressing up. I used to check out the events during London Fashion Week that were open to the public and discover up-and-coming designers at the sample sales. I remember getting my first Alice Temperley skirt there."



Bag a bag from Mint's extensive collection

After chalking up years of work experience, the two friends had an epiphany while cleaning out their closets and compiling large piles of beautiful things. "Motherhood happened and we just couldn't fit into them anymore," Tan laments. "We tried to rehome the pieces and realised there wasn't a platform where people could appreciate and enjoy these clothes as much as we had."

Setting up a stall at bazaars was considered but Lim had gone down that route before. "Somehow, the crowd would never be quite the right fit and I didn't sell much," she says. "It was only after I found this empty office unit that I approached Geoh Hwa to see if she would be keen to open a pre-loved boutique together. She said yes and that was how Mint Apparels was born."

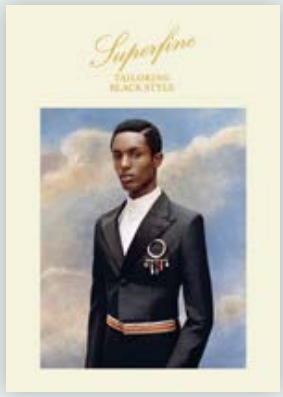
The name, of course, alludes to the clothes and accessories being in mint condition and a fresh, inviting experience far removed from musty racks in, say, an Oxfam or Barnardo's. Having come a long way since it was opened in July 2023 with "a lot of naïve enthusiasm", the founders acknowledge several factors worked in their favour.

"To have a long-time friend as a business partner certainly makes the entrepreneurial journey less intimidating and a whole lot more fun," Tan enthuses. "We are also grateful to family and friends who supported us from the start, helping us spread the word. Many have never shopped pre-loved before. But once they came to the boutique to view and try things on, they were converted! And that really gave us the self-belief and encouragement to continue. We know the demand is there and we *have* the supply!"

On the subject of supply, Lim and Tan are never short as they have a constant stream of eager consignors who know that Mint Apparels' strong customer base is just right for their luxe items. "We also have a high customer retention rate. Once they shop with us, it is just the beginning, with many reordering online. Or they browse our Instagram or website and send us a DM, after which we will courier the purchases to them directly, up to Penang and as far as Sabah," they say.

There is a hidden danger, though. How is it that two stylish, successful women with a great eye for design and detail resist snapping up steals every time fresh stock arrives? "I never resist, unfortunately," says Lim while Tan still mourns the "loss" of a Moncler winter jacket. "It got pounced on so quickly we didn't even manage to take a photo of it," she laughs. "Once, it also took a lot of willpower not to buy a very flattering black Self-Portrait dress as well as a pair of black suede ankle boots by Christian Louboutin that just seemed to go with every outfit!"

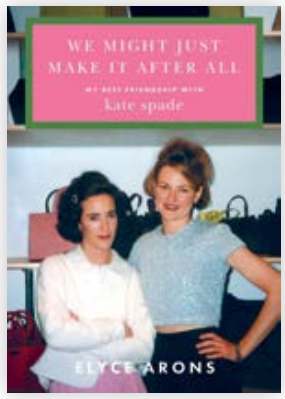
Lim adds: "My mum loved shopping at designer stores and the highlight of many a holiday were the things we bought," she smiles. "Her wardrobe is like a boutique itself, with many things worn just once and kept in pristine condition. The realisation they will just stay in the cupboard forever if nothing is done was a big part of why I went to Geoh Hwa with the Mint Apparels idea. Moreover, having lived in Europe for 15 years and hitting all the factory outlets, you can see I love designer clothing as much as I love a good bargain. And guess what? Mint Apparels represents the best of both worlds." (mintapparels.com) E



Superfine: Tailoring Black Style

By Monica L Miller

Echoing the Met Gala 2025 theme Superfine: Tailoring Black Style, this volume of the same title by Monica L Miller examines the history of Black Dandyism across three centuries. The book is packed with vivid photos of garments, accessories and artworks from the 1700s to the present, accompanied by in-depth research on the subject. The style has changed and evolved, from being used as a uniform by Black servants to serving a political purpose and defining hip-hop fashion and popular streetwear. The author looks at how dandyism has shaped the current realities through works by celebrated contemporary designers and historical figures.



We Might Just Make It After All: My Best Friendship with Kate Spade

By Elyce Arons

At its core, *We Might Just Make It After All* is a love letter from American brand Kate Spade's co-founder Elyce Arons to Katy Brosnahan, her college best friend who eventually became her partner in a bag business that would one day shake the accessories industry. Professional and personal lives converge in this book that explores the power of friendship and sisterhood, challenges faced by female entrepreneurs in the 1990s and the successful story of a generation-defining label. Inspiring as it is heart-wrenching, it follows the duo's adventures and misadventures across four decades, until Brosnahan's tragic suicide in 2018.



Audrey Hepburn: A Life of Beautiful Uncertainty

By Tom Santopietro

The film and fashion industries were her playgrounds, and her popularity was put to good use. Academy Award-winning actress Audrey Hepburn left a lasting legacy marked by her extraordinary talent and activism work in advocating for children's rights. Comprehensive and engaging, this biography by Tom Santopietro observes Hepburn's on-screen presence and sophisticated approach to dressing up, and zooms in on her intimate moments with close friends as well as her public service activities. It is filled with photographs and vignettes of the celebrity at her most captivating, making it a visual treat for those who admire the star's style sensibility.



Rick Owens: Temple of Love

By Rick Owens, Miren Arzalluz + Alexandre Samson

One of the avant-garde designers recently nominated for British Fashion Awards 2025, Rick Owens is recognised for his provocative and subversive approach to design, making him a daring, transformative force in the colourful industry. From an industrial pattern-cutter, Owens rose to prominence after launching his eponymous label in 1994, crafting experimental and eccentric garments inspired by underground culture and the glamour of the 1930s era. *Temple of Love* records the brand's major retrospective of the same name (ongoing at Palais Galliera in Paris until next January), complete with curatorial essays describing the multidisciplinary's distinctive vision and philosophy.

STYLE STITCHED IN PAGES

From couture to cultural icons, this selection of fashion books explores identity, legacy and design through time

BY AIREENA AZNI



Beyond Adornment: Jewelry and Identity in Art

By Yvonne J Markowitz and Susanne Gänsicke

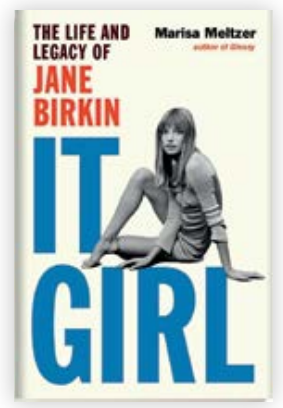
What is it about jewels that make them such a treasure from prehistoric times? From serving as an expression of wealth, status and power to providing spiritual protection, the ornaments have been documented throughout history in paintings, sculptures and other media across civilisations, cementing their undeniable importance to humanity. *Beyond Adornment: Jewelry and Identity in Art* answers the question by presenting a fresh, interdisciplinary perspective on studying jewellery. It showcases an assemblage of remarkable artworks featuring figures wearing these dazzling precious adornments, which are seen as crucial indicators of their identity in their respective social contexts.



Valentino: A Grand Italian Epic

By Taschen

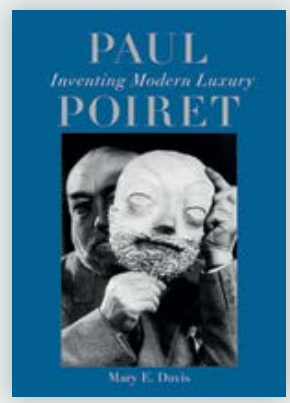
First published in 2007, *Valentino: A Grand Italian Epic* is a voluminous tome (it comprises close to 600 pages and weighs almost 5kg) that traces the tale of a revered couturier born in 1932. It details Valentino Garavani's journey in fashion, his illustrious career at Valentino as well as his achievement as one of the influential figures who gave significant weight to the "Made in Italy" mark. The highly collectible book has been reissued recently, boasting images from the designer's archives, including drawings, editorial shoots, portraits and documentary photographs to provide an in-depth look at the man, his lifestyle and his brilliance.



It Girl: The Life and Legacy of Jane Birkin

By Marisa Meltzer

She was described as the epitome of French style: effortlessly chic and elegant. English-French star Jane Birkin enshrined her artistic legacy through films and music. But she was also a powerful personality that shook the fashion industry after becoming the inspiration behind one of the world's most coveted bags, the Hermès Birkin. Drawing on interviews and extensive archival research, author Marisa Meltzer offers a closer look into the icon's life and lifestyle, from her early years in 1960s London to her rise as a beloved celebrity in France, revealing moments of personal challenges, her relationships with luxury powerhouses and the duality of her public and private selves.



Paul Poiret: Inventing Modern Luxury

By Mary Davis

Before Chanel, Dior or Saint Laurent and the like, there was Paul Poiret. Born in Paris in 1879, he was considered the boldest designer of the pre-war period and dubbed the first modernist couturier. His extravagant creations might have attracted renowned figures in Europe and America, but it was his vision in redefining styles and culture as well as establishing business networks beyond fashion that solidified his presence at the time. Mary Davis gathers insightful information that unveils the luminary's innovative outlook in driving his brand forward and how it became the guiding principle for the modern luxury model that we know today. E

FEAST FOR THE EYES

Radiant and refined selections to make your mark on the next night out

BY LEE CHARMYNN + PUTERI INARAH



Tucked away in an elegant cream bottle is the citrusy Allure Homme Édition Blanche by **Chanel**. A spritz or two greets the wearer with fresh lemon, before diffusing into hints of New Caledonian sandalwood, Haitian vetiver and Madagascar vanilla. (From RM495, chanel.com)





King Seiko brings the glory of Tokyo's horizon to your wrist with the latest additions from its 2025 Vanac collection. The vast city's sunrise is immortalised in the warm gold, limited-edition SLA089. Horizontal stripes race across the dial, while the second hand is decorated with a stylised "V" for the series' name. The Calibre 8L45 has a 72-hour power reserve to see you through the day. (RM15,600, seikowatches.com)



Sporting **Rimowa**'s iconic parallel stripes, the Original Crossbody Bag 19 is a miniature of the brand's signature suitcase. Still keeping all of its functionality and form, it has a sturdy aluminium exterior and full-grain Italian leather interior with a zipped compartment. (RM10,500, rimowa.com)



Sometimes, a bit of bling is all it needs to elevate one's evening look. **Cartier**'s Love bracelet is crafted from 18-carat white gold, studded with 175 brilliant-cut diamonds. Fastened with the help of a dedicated tool, the bangle symbolises everlasting adoration. (RM268,000, cartier.com)



The Meisterstück wallet by **Montblanc** is crafted from smooth leather, finished with a hand-applied sfumato effect that gives its brown gradient a soft, seamless appearance. Slip essentials into any of its six card slots and organise bills with the in-built money clip. (RM2,115, montblanc.com)

This cosy sleeveless cardigan vest by **Louis Vuitton** features detailed jacquard adorned with an array of the house's signature motifs, including chequered Damier patterns and Monogram flowers. Ribbing along the arm holes, waist and fastening gives extra texture to the piece, which secures with horn buttons. (RM8,250, my.louisvuitton.com)



If black shoes seem a little too formal, pick up these brown suede loafers from **Gucci** for a more versatile pair. Its simple silhouette is enhanced by a brand staple: a silver-toned Horsebit on the front. Rubber lug soles ensure a good grip and high durability for urban excursions. (US$1,270, gucci.com)



The Carrera Astronomer by **Tag Heuer** pays homage to space exploration, drawing inspiration from John Glenn's 1962 Friendship 7 mission in 1962 — the moment a timepiece from the maison became the first Swiss watch to orbit Earth. Powered by Calibre 7, the 39mm steel-and-rose gold ticker boasts a silver sunray-brushed dial and a celestial moon phase display at 6 o' clock. (RM30,000, tagheuer.com.my)





Having trouble picking between metal and gemstones? These two-toned diamond studs from **Le Lumiere** offer the best of both worlds. Sparkling with subtle brilliance, the rose gold elements add a touch of warmth, making this the perfect adornment for everyday elegance or evening splendour. (From RM8,299, lelumiere.com)



Your new favourite for autumn nights, **Hermès**' L'Ambre Des Merveilles Eau de Parfum brings together glowing amber, velvety patchouli and sweet Balsam of Peru in a sensual and comforting mix with woody and rich notes (RM1,100, sephora.my)



Selberan's Persia bangle will draw all the attention to your wrist. Moulded from 18-carat gold with high polished finishing, this piece is inspired by ancient Persian artistry dating back to the 16th century. Slip it on solo for maximum impact or stack it with other bracelets for a grand layered ensemble. (RM28,900, selberan.com)



This statement Tubogas necklace by **Bvlgari** was crafted using a historic Roman jewellery technique that marries industrial design with artisanal mastery. The 18-carat yellow gold accessory is embellished with diamond pavé studs to create a sleek, striking form. (RM96,300, bulgari.com)

Turn heads in this shimmering maxi skirt from **Self-Portrait** that resembles liquid gold. Fixed with a concealed zip closure, it effortlessly flows from the high waistline. Keep it cool with an oversized shirt tucked in, or elevate it further with a fitted crop top and strappy heels. (US$455, self-portrait.com)



The Tempête L from **Delvaux** embodies quiet luxury — its architectural silhouette and spacious interior are able to bear a volume of daily necessities for when you are on the go. The leather top handle bag is accented with silver metal and features an adjustable and removable shoulder strap for comfort and versatility. (RM39,100, us.delvaux.com)



CHANEL

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