



## RULING BRITANNIA

LONDON'S FIRST-EVER MEN'S FASHION WEEK KICKED OFF THE SPRING SEASON AND INCLUDED COLLECTIONS FROM PRINGLE OF SCOTLAND, HACKETT, E. TAUTZ AND OTHERS. FOR MORE, SEE PAGES 6 AND 7.

# WWD

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## Fresh Paint

Artsy prints are holding strong for resort. At Alice + Olivia, Stacey Bendet channeled a tropical paradise, working a pastel watercolor pattern on this silk and spandex blouse and pair of cotton shorts. For more looks from the contemporary market, see pages 4 and 5.



PHOTO BY JOHN AQUINO

### INSIDE JOB

## Fake Hermès Ring Busted In France

By JOELLE DIDERICH

PARIS — Hermès International said the French national police dismantled an international crime ring that produced counterfeit versions of several of its bags with the help of the luxury house's employees.

"This operation concludes a one-year investigation following an Hermès complaint based on clues and abnormal behavior identified through the house's internal monitoring systems," the company said.

Two Hermès employees have been dismissed as a result of the probe, but the company believes that several current members of staff could also be involved. The bags were sold through a parallel distribution network in Europe, the U.S. and Asia, it added.

A dozen people are believed to have been arrested in the bust on Thursday, during which police discovered clandestine workshops filled with precious leather skins. The Paris public prosecutor was said to have estimated the value of sales by one branch of the ring alone at 18 million euros, or \$22 million at current exchange.

"Hermès is very satisfied with the efficient and diligent collaboration established with the national gendarmerie in this case and reiterates its relentless commitment to fighting counterfeiting," the company added. "This action puts an end to the fraudulent project in progress."

Counterfeiting costs France 6 billion euros, or \$7.5 billion at current exchange, in lost revenue every year, according to the French National Anti-Counterfeiting Committee, or CNAC. French luxury goods association Comité Colbert recently unveiled a new campaign against counterfeiting that uses tongue-in-cheek slogans to raise awareness of the issue among travelers in airports.

Famed for its Birkin bags and silk scarves, Hermès has stepped up its public statements against counterfeiting in recent weeks.

In an interview with WWD last month, Hermès chief executive officer Patrick Thomas called for Internet service providers, search engines and social

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## Saks Pumps Up Shoes

By DAVID MOIN

NEW YORK — Saks Fifth Avenue wants a bigger footprint when it comes to shoes.

On the eighth level of Saks' Manhattan flagship where shoes are sold, Ron Frasch, president and chief merchant of Saks, stands like the gatekeeper: "I watch the women get off the elevator, with their eyes wide open. They're not walking onto the floor. They're kind of diving into it. It's an emotional purchase," Frasch said. "I wish I could figure out how to do that on every floor."

Saks is pumping up its five-year-old shoe strategy, called 10022-Shoe, at the same time that Barneys New York and Macy's revamp their shoe floors, attesting to just how hot the category is. Barneys on Madison Avenue will reopen its shoe floor next month, and this fall, Macy's says it will open the world's largest shoe floor. Selfridges and Harrods have been innovating as well with expanded shoe departments.

At the Saks flagship, the 10022-Shoe floor is growing to 32,150 square feet, with 16,650 for selling and 15,500 for storage, from a total of 22,000 square feet previously. The expansion brings the entire shoe assortment together — designer; Wear, which is bridge; contemporary; day, and evening — with contemporary shoes relocating from five to a designated area on eight east of the escalators where gifts were housed. Gifts move up to nine, where a new concept including Rizzoli books and John L. Strong stationery is being developed.

The expansion is an attempt by Saks' to cobble together a shoe assortment that's more balanced, less

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ACCESSORIES

# Gold Shines at JCK and Couture Shows

By MARCY MEDINA

LAS VEGAS — In uncertain economic times, invest in gold.

That's clearly the feeling of fine jewelry firms, which are once again making yellow gold a centerpiece of their collections. The push comes as gold prices have stabilized somewhat at about \$1,670 an ounce, compared with last year's high of \$1,900.

"At the top end of the market, we're seeing the value of gold being perceived as a positive. It becomes a justification for a bigger purchase," said David Lamb, managing director of jewelry at the World Gold Council, which was one of nearly 3,000 exhibi-

**We sold more big necklaces in the past three to six months than we did in the whole two years prior.**

— GREG KWIAK,  
FRED LEIGHTON

tors at the recent JCK Las Vegas show here, which ran simultaneously with Couture. "And we're not seeing a rush toward minimalism; people want craftsmanship, and you can do more intricate designs with gold."

Overall, executives were upbeat about business while acknowledging there are still some hills to climb.

"We've seen growth led by the higher end," said Greg Kwiat, chief financial officer of Kwiat and chief executive officer of Fred Leighton. "We sold more big necklaces in the past three to six months than we did in the whole two years prior, but when there's uncertainty in the economy, you can feel the immediate pullback. The jewelry sec-

tor is a leading indicator."

Andrea Hansen, president of Ivanka Trump, agreed, adding: "We're all hoping for a faster economic recovery and we all have to work harder to make the same sale." She noted that she was encouraged by new pockets in the U.S. market coming on board such as Cedar Rapids, Mich. and Palo Alto, Calif.

New textures and finishes were prevalent in gold jewelry, such as Yossi Harari's "brown gold" and Carolina Bucci's yellow, white and rose gold beads, which were either brushed to give a matte shimmer or worked with a diamond-tipped instrument to give a sparkly look. "I've seen all my biggest clients get back in the game," said Harari. "You can feel more confidence in the richer people who actually move the market."

The Judith Ripka Cos. Inc. showed an all-yellow gold collection for the first time. "Our significant investment in gold was apparent to retailers, encouraged by our expansion in the breadth of Judith's 18 karat Couture Collection of high-end pieces," said Charles M. Jayson, president of Judith Ripka.

Also making an investment in yellow gold was Hearts on Fire, which hired new creative director Ilaria Lanzoni to take the brand in a more fashion-forward direction. Eighteen-karat yellow gold figured strongly in one of two new collections, with one weighty cuff priced at \$75,000 retail.

At Marco Bicego, known for its hand etched gold matte beads, colored gemstones, in a variety of textures, were also introduced into new collections such as Murano, as well as one-of-a-kind pieces.

"The handmade element has always been the driving force behind our brand, but our DNA is evolving toward a fine jewelry direction that we believe is the future,"



Judith Ripka earrings.

said president Moise Cohen. "So far, we've seen a tremendous response to this shift as our average retail price has grown." The brand's sweet spot is about \$5,000 but one-offs are priced between \$8,000 and \$20,000.

Georg Jensen was another brand evolving toward a more high-end direction. "We are known for our silver, but our diamond business has been through the roof," said president James Crespo. "It adds about 20 percent to our worldwide business and 25 percent in the U.S."

The company now features more gold and diamond collections including a special order pavé diamond cuff from its Fusion group that retails for \$135,000.

One-of-a-kind pieces were more prevalent at this year's Couture show, which featured 343 brands. Irene Neuwirth sold all 200 of her one-off pieces, ranging up to \$120,000 each, within the

first two hours of the show. "We're not at the show to open new business. For us, it's about catering to existing accounts, and their customers are ready for the next step. It's been long enough that they trust the brand," she said of her nine-year-old company.

Monica Rich Kosann also sold several one-of-a-kind lockets at Couture ranging in price from \$25,000 to \$150,000. "We sold all of the one-of-a-kinds we created over the last two seasons and project significant growth in this category," she said of the third season.

Blue and green stones such as blue diamonds, sapphires, tanzanite, opal and jade were another key trend, showcased in Roberto Coin's Shanghai group, created to cater to the Chinese customer, as well as in Kwiat's ombré earrings and Fred Leighton's new color-filled collection. It was also on display with offerings from Nam Cho and Ivanka Trump, which introduced color for the first time this season with emeralds.

Red stones such as ruby, garnet, sapphire and spinel look to be the next big color trend, though several designers, such as Nina Runsdorf, showed them for fall. Runsdorf evolved the diamond and sapphire slice earrings that many other designers have since picked up into combining different cuts, such as briolettes with rows of beads and rose- or tabiz-cut diamonds accented with slices.

Carved jade and turquoise, as well as snakes and dragons for the Chinese New Year were also popular design motifs, as seen at Bochic and in Erica Courtney's Imperial Collection.

At the other end of the price spectrum, the elevation of sterling silver products was a key trend. For example, Judith Ripka's Estate Collection mirrored the craftsmanship of her gold pieces using less expensive gemstones for a fraction of the price. One sterling silver and green quartz cuff retailed for \$1,600 versus the white gold and emerald version for \$34,500. Ripka's Jayson noted that silver was "the hot must-have group for fall."

Whether customers were looking for everyday versions of their high-end pieces or for better value, both shows saw the debut of several sterling silver collections.

Coomi, known for its intricate gold pieces, launched a silver collection with a totally different design viewpoint, namely more structured and tribal designs, priced between \$500 and \$5,000.

Thailand-based silver manufacturer Pranda Group introduced its first American brand, Ariva, at JCK. "There was a gap in the U.S. market we felt we could meet with our strength in manufacturing," said executive director Chanat Sorakraikitkul, who already oversees several branded lines in Asia and Europe.

The darker Gothic or rock-inspired look of oxidized sterling silver or rhodium-plated gold continued, as seen at Paul Morelli, Mizuki, Aramenta, MAD by Madstone and Stephen Webster.



A bangle from Yossi Harari.

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A look from Marco Bicego.

## Morgenthal Frederics Ups Exposure With New Campaign

By ALEXANDRA STEIGRAD

MORGENTHAL FREDERIC'S, the maker of luxe eyewear, is getting a facelift.

A new advertising campaign and revamped Web site set to launch in tandem on Friday will mark the New York-based brand's push to extend its reach.

"This is a tremendous opportunity for us. It's a springboard for Morgenthal," said Jeff Press, the brand's designer and vice president of merchandising and design. "We think this gives us a strong platform to become a national player. We are looking to expand into new markets."

Although he could not yet reveal Morgenthal's store opening plan, he said the brand's parent company, Luxury Optical Holdings, is in the process of converting some of its stores into Morgenthal boutiques.

Luxury Optical has 45 doors, six of which are Morgenthal stores, and recently

converted its Aspen, Colo., and Oak Street, Chicago, units into Morgenthal locations.

"Morgenthal's sales have more than tripled in the last five years and we expect that growth to continue at the same rate," he said, adding that the new site and campaign will play a big role in that development.

The ad campaign includes a short film and still images shot by photographer Beau Grealy, and features actor Norman Reedus, who is best known for his role on television series "The Walking Dead."

The film is a New York love story, featuring some of the city's most iconic landmarks and some of Morgenthal's unique frames such as the Dave, a pair of black buffalo horn-framed glasses with gray gradient lenses that retails for \$1,595. All the glasses depicted in the film are available at Morgenthal Frederics stores and other Luxury Optical Holdings boutiques throughout the country.

"We wanted to capture and share the

cinematic qualities of the Manhattan lifestyle, which are synonymous with the timeless appeal of Morgenthal Frederics," said Press. "Through using two mediums — photography and moving image — we were better able to capture that New York love story and the enduring qualities of our eyewear."

Shot in black and white, the images, eight in total, along with the short film, will be released consecutively over the next few months via the brand's Web site and through social media outlets. The first image will make its debut with

the relaunched Web site this week.

"We view Morgenthal as an old time luxury brand that is moving forward into the modern age, and we are looking to continue to elevate ourselves," Press added.



An image from the new campaign.