

COMMERCE

## Poltrona Frau taps Alexander Wang to appeal to urbanites

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*Alexander Wang spring/summer 2015 campaign image*

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By SARAH JONES

American fashion designer Alexander Wang is helping Italian furniture brand Poltrona Frau reach urbanites with a capsule collection.

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Mr. Wang, who also serves as the creative director of Balenciaga, is known for his typically dark color palette and streetwear influences, which translated to an all-black trio of pieces for Poltrona Frau. The home furnishings brand frequently collaborates with traditional designers, but this may help raise awareness among a younger set.

"Any luxury brand not actively looking for collaborations isn't really luxury," said Chris Ramey, president of [Affluent Insights](#), Miami, FL. "Brand associations drive luxury.

"Awareness of luxury brands is generally far lower than most marketers would like to believe," he said. "Collaborations allow brands to expand their presence and refine who they are."

Mr. Ramey is not affiliated with Alexander Wang or Poltrona Frau, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

[Alexander Wang](#) and [Poltrona Frau](#) did not respond by press deadline.

## Working together

For Poltrona Frau, Mr. Wang crafted two brass-footed beanbag chairs—one in black shearling and one in leather, retailing at \$8,800. The final piece of the collection is a bar cabinet covered in shagreen, with brass shelves inside, which will sell for \$18,500.



### *Alexander Wang for Poltrona Frau*

Mr. Wang told the [Wall Street Journal](#) that he liked the concept of taking something as “banal” as a beanbag chair and making it a luxury item.

“For me, design always has to stem from a place of integrity—and a genuine interest in something that I would want for myself or would be excited by,” the designer told WSJ.

“But at the same time, I like to reappropriate things so there’s a sense of irony,” he said. “How do we take it from what we know to something that feels more extreme—very extreme, sometimes?”

The collection of three pieces took two years to develop, a process that began around the same time he was appointed at Balenciaga.



*Balenciaga spring/summer 2015 campaign*

A luxury brand's heritage will likely carry it through creative role changes within a company. However, the appointment of a widely-known designer such as that of Alexander Wang to creative director at Balenciaga can stir up a brand's reputation in the fashion industry.

From a marketing perspective, the hiring of Mr. Wang at the Kering-owned brand meant a refreshed public image as he is known by his design personality in addition to his skills. Fifteen-year Balenciaga creative director Nicolas Ghesquière propelled the label when he began his role and the same followed as Mr. Wang brought his own youthful aesthetic to the label ([see story](#)).

Mr. Wang told WSJ, "Over the last 10 years, furniture is where my interest has really evolved. When I started working in fashion, I always had an idea of an environment in my head, but how to actualize it, and what the references meant, that's new."

Poltrona Frau currently manufactures Bottega Veneta's home line. It has also worked with a number of luxury brands, including Salvatore Ferragamo, Louis Vuitton, Cartier and De Beers, on custom furniture to decorate their stores.



*Bottega Veneta home collection*

The brand's leather is also used in the seating for Ferrari, Maserati, Bugatti and BMW vehicles.

### Combining forces

Furniture brands often partner with creatives outside of their discipline to gain a different perspective and reach an enthusiastic audience.

French furniture company Roche Bobois connected consumer penchant for home design and modern art through a collection featuring the artwork of French artist Jean Cocteau available for purchase Dec. 1.

The furniture maker joined forces with the Jean Cocteau Committee which manages Cocteau's estate to create a series of products that double as functional pieces of art. Roche Bobois is likely to introduce Cocteau's work to its own enthusiasts in a way that makes the artwork more accessible ([see story](#)).

These types of collaborations allow design to achieve a level of seasonality, while letting fashion brands become a part of consumers' lives on a more permanent basis.

"Fashion is often driven by immediacy – and fleeting favor – whereas design has a long shelf life," Mr. Ramey said. "Both brands will benefit from the other's category attributes.

"Finding kindred spirit brands that share the same client without competing is the sweet spot of partnerships," he said.

"Awareness and brand DNA are two of the first steps on an affluent client's decision tree. This collaboration, as do many of the most effective collaborations, will positively affect both brands where they need it most."

### Final Take

*Sarah Jones, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York*

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