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Barneys urges designers to think local with Made in New York initiative

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Looks from The Row and Proenza Schouler for Made in New York

By SARAH JONES

Department store chain Barneys New York is supporting the fashion industry in its hometown through an initiative that promotes local manufacturing.

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For its exclusive Made in New York collection, the retailer is partnering with the Council of Fashion Designers of America and the New York City Economic Development Corporation to bring designers together with Fashion Manufacturing Initiative grant recipients of varying specialties. With New York Fashion Week around the corner, having Barneys take up this cause may help spur change in the industry and bring more production back to New York.

"Steven Kolb and I were brainstorming over lunch about how Barneys could become more involved in the CFDA through a program that would really mean something to Barneys," said Daniella Vitale, chief operating officer of [Barneys](#), New York. "As a New York centric company with a downtown store opening early next year, we decided a Made In New York project would support our city but also allow Barneys to invest in a sector of our industry that has been deteriorating over the years.

"We want this initiative to bring awareness, greater investment and support for an industry that has long been overlooked here in New York," she said. "This is a turning point for some and my guess is others will follow, including us."

Staying local

The FMI is a project developed by both the CFDA and the NYCEDC with the goal of growing and protecting garment manufacturing within New York. Production facilities can apply for an FMI Grant Fund to help them innovate with technology so they can better meet the needs of fashion brands.

For the Made in New York collection, Barneys joins in this effort. The New York-based labels Altuzarra, Narciso Rodriguez, Proenza Schouler, The Row, R13, Rag & Bone and Thom Browne designed pieces exclusively for Barneys, and then were paired up with FMI Grant facilities to bring their visions to life, keeping the process within the city.



Made in New York sketches

The menswear, women's wear and accessories available in Barneys stores and its ecommerce site all use a color palette of black, white, grey and red. Proenza Schouler made grommet-embellished separates in black, while R13 made more casual attire, including a red buffalo plaid shirt.



Look from R13 for Barneys' Made in New York

With merchandise retailing between \$95 and \$4,800, consumers with a variety of price points and lifestyles can participate.

To launch the collection, which premiered on Barneys.com Aug. 19, the retailer shared a video interview with CFDA president and CEO Steven Kolb in which he and Barneys fashion director Tomoko Ogura talk more about the inspiration for the initiative.

During New York Fashion Week in September, when the global fashion community will descend on New York to take in the runway shows, Barneys's Madison Avenue flagship will feature the designs in a window display. The idea behind this initiative is to show that New York is an ideal place of production not just for local designers, but for international labels as well, making this a prime time to promote that message.



Exterior of Barneys

Ten percent of Barneys' proceeds from the Made in New York collection will go to the FMI.

This initiative is anticipated to have an impact on job creation in the apparel sector, protecting an important trade in the city for future generations. According to statistics from the NYCEDC, 6 percent of the entire workforce in New York, or 180,000 individuals, are employed in the garment industry.

"We have seen wonderful growth with U.S. manufactured product in certain parts of the business," Ms. Vitale said. "This capsule will be a great test to see if this initiative resonates with our consumers, and we think it will. Regardless, it is something we will continue to support and communicate."

Relationship status

Barneys works to cultivate strong bonds with design labels, collaborating with brands on exclusive merchandise and campaigns.

For instance, the department store is putting a spotlight on accessories with two newly launched campaigns centering around footwear and handbags.

The retailer's windows are currently featuring a colorful rotating display of shoes and bags from the likes of Saint Laurent and Manolo Blahnik, and the store is also at the start of a six-month project that will take eight iconic shoes and give them the Barneys touch. Both initiatives enable Barneys to showcase its selection and relationships with design labels ([see story](#)).

Barneys' previously partnered with the CFDA, Intel and Opening Ceremony on a smart bracelet ([see story](#)).

Technology has disrupted the luxury industry, but the impact varies across sectors and depends on how innovation has been incorporated, according to a panel session at the Financial Times' Business of Luxury Summit June 8.

The "How new technology is influencing manufacturers" panel, led by Rachel Sanderson,

the Milan correspondent of the Financial Times, brought together fashion, jewelry and home interiors to give summit attendees a “snapshot” of what is currently happening in this “moment of digital disruption.” For luxury, there is a struggle between implementing new, innovative technologies and the timelessness of artisan craft that defines the industry ([see story](#)).

This latest initiative celebrates the traditional skills used in the industry while helping garment manufacturing in New York move forward.

"Barneys has historically been given accolades for finding and bringing European designers and brands to the U.S., but we also want to celebrate the relationship that we have with American, and specifically New York-based, designers and brands," Ms. Vitale said. "Part of that is acknowledging and supporting the industry behind all of these great talents. It was overlooked but this is our home and we have an obligation to support the community that has made us such a success."

Final Take

Sarah Jones, staff reporter on Luxury Daily, New York

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