

COMMERCE

Sergio Rossi and Eco-Age team up for green carpet collection

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Sergio Rossi's eco-friendly Chysalide shoe

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

Footwear and accessories brand Sergio Rossi is partnering with creative director Livia Firth's Eco-Age to become the first accessories label offering a Green Carpet Collection, a wardrobe emphasizing sustainability.

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The collection, made available this week, was created entirely in Italy and includes organic silk yarn, spun and woven in the country, lead-free Swarovski Advanced crystals, European chrome-free leather and Forest Stewardship Council-certified wood. The volume of the collection goes to show that sustainability does not compromise quality and that environmentally sustainable clothing need not be a niche market.

"The ability to integrate eco-friendly goods within apparel and footwear brands showcases a socially conscious movement that there is an awareness of utilizing these materials, preserving resources and acknowledging that their customer base is interested in seeing this progressive movement," said Kimmie Smith, co-founder/creative director at [Accessory 2](#), New York. "It also creates a conversation with those that have an interest in these efforts and shows how brands are willing to evolve over time and across their customer base."

"Eco-friendly is an increasingly important to those who are increasingly wealthier; millennials," added Christopher Ramey, president of **Affluent Insights**, Miami. "Large companies have a civic responsibility to lead by doing good."

Ms. Smith and Mr. Ramey are not associated with Sergio Rossi or Eco-Age, but agreed to comment as industry experts.

Sergio Rossi and **Eco-Age** were unable to respond by press deadline.

Nothing but flowers

Eco-Age, a brand consultancy firm focused on helping brands grow through the use of sustainable products, has partnerships with numerous other luxury brands, including Tom Ford, Armani, Chopard, Gucci, Prada and Valentino.

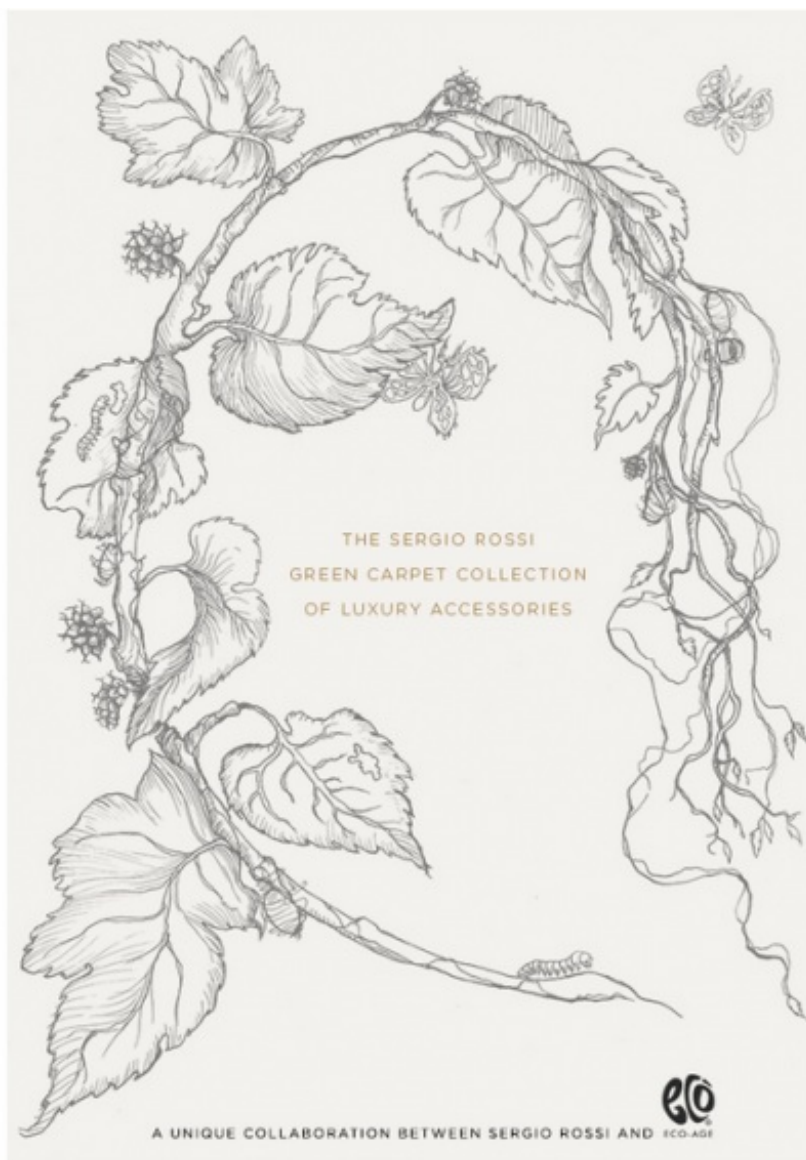


Illustration by Elena Borghi

Sergio Rossi announced the collection to consumers with a pair of emails containing images hand-drawn by Elena Borghi, one of a woman and another of tree leaves and branches, with the words "The Sergio Rossi Green Carpet Collection of luxury accessories" overlaid. Clicking the image will land consumers on Sergio Rossi's Web site, awaited by Ms. Borghi's 15-second animated video.

The video makes visible connections between the consumer, nature and the Sergio Rossi show. It begins with the image of the woman used in one of the emails and shows a tree branch emerging in front of the viewer. Following three more images of what appears to be tree leaves and branches growing, the video cuts to a butterfly, its wings patterned after the formations in the previous images.

There is another cut, this time to a white shoe, where the butterfly flies from out of the frame onto the back of the shoe, completing the design.



Illustration by Elena Borghi

“The opportunity to work with Eco-Age and develop a truly organic silk yarn was so exciting,” said Angelo Ruggeri, collections and design director at Sergio Rossi, Milan, in a statement on the same page as the video. “I’ve used butterfly as a symbol of delicacy and to add a little touch of poetry and femininity to this project. I am so proud of this collection as it truly represents the essence of Sergio Rossi.”

With research showing both that the environment is one of the primary concerns of young people and that younger consumers care about a brand’s core values, it is becoming increasingly important for luxury brands to go green. Kering, the conglomerate that owns the accessories label, has a track record of deep dedication to the environment, which includes Sergio Rossi’s environmentally sustainable eco pump that launched in May 2009, and intends to offset the collection’s carbon emissions.

The partnership has clear benefits for both parties, with Sergio Rossi making itself more attractive to consumers concerned with the environment and Eco-Age continuing to push for sustainable fashion as it adds another luxury brand to its impressive clientele.

"Bringing two luxury brands together opens the door to new clients and increases the gravitas of both brands," said Mr. Ramey. "It's a new market; but it's also a pledge to do good. It's why collaborations are effective."

Mother Nature's son

Sergio Rossi is not the only brand to produce environmentally sustainable wear.

This May, Swiss jeweler Chopard introduced its first jewelry line crafted from ethically mined gold.

Palme Verte is made of Fairmined 18-karat yellow gold, sourced from artisan and small-scale miners. The collection of earrings, a pendant, a ring and bracelet are based on the Palm d'Or trophy made by Chopard and presented to winners at the Cannes Film Festival, making this line a collector's item, as well as something they can feel good about ([see story](#)).

Service-based sectors have also recently showcased their concern for the environment.

Last month, Starwood Hotels and Resorts made waves furthering its efforts to reduce water usage across all its properties.

Efforts to conserve water will include more efficient irrigation, low-flow faucets, collecting and recycling water and an option for customers to request reduced housekeeping services in exchange for Starpoints, a voucher or a charitable donation. The initiative cements Starwood as a leader in water conservation efforts, emphasizes its global awareness and is likely to appeal to a younger, more environmentally-conscious demographic ([see story](#)).

"For Sergio Rossi as well as Kering, sustainability is still about doing what you do well and finding the best items possible to present that vision to their consumer base directly and those who have yet to purchase," Accessory 2's Ms. Smith said. "These firms incorporate so much time and effort into their brands that this decision was one that creates a new building block to showcase how luxury and sustainability will be able to come together in a way that is befitting of the brand."

Final Take

Forrest Cardamenis, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

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