

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Fashion sells dreams, not dresses: Paul Surridge

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Under Paul Surridge, Roberto Cavalli's glamour has been reinterpreted. Image credit: Roberto Cavalli

By SARAH JONES

VENICE, Italy – Luxury fashion is missing an element of aspiration as it focuses on trying to speed up to meet demand for instant gratification, according to the creative director of Roberto Cavalli.

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During a panel at the Financial Times Business of Luxury Summit on May 22, Roberto Cavalli's Paul Surridge and the creative director of Ferragamo's women's collections Paul Andrew spoke about the experience of holding the head design position at a longstanding house. While both panelists take their respective house founders' legacies into account, they are both focused on pushing the brand forward without losing sight of the past.

"When you take over the body of work of someone who's 48 years, you have to embrace that," Mr. Surridge said. "Because right now storytelling is fundamental to the success of brands."

Creative directions

Whereas the role of a creative director used to revolve around producing collections in a room and showing them. Today, the position is more of a co-creator and face of the brand.

Both Mr. Andrew and Mr. Surridge came to their current positions without a background in women's wear design. Mr. Surridge was a menswear designer, while Mr. Andrew had studied apparel and footwear design in college but had been focused on shoes post-graduation.

Originally, Mr. Andrew was one of three designers at the helm of **Ferragamo**, in charge of women's footwear. He had an idea in his head of who his woman was, but the women's wear designer at the time had a conflicting image.

After his designs performed well at retail, the company expanded his role to include women's wear.

Shoes are the best performing category for the brand, making up the largest portion of its sales. Mr. Andrew designs feet first, using his shoes to help guide his ready-to-wear designs.



Paul Andrew's first Ferragamo collection was presented in February. Image credit: Ferragamo

Both designers have strategized their ready-to-wear around modern lifestyles. While **Cavalli** does have a strong presence in eveningwear, Mr. Surridge chose to expand on its assortment to grow the business.

"People don't walk around in 19 meters of chiffon," he said.

Meanwhile, Mr. Andrew decided to focus Ferragamo's collections primarily on daywear.

He originally tried to fight the rise of the sneaker, unsure if it was right for the brand, but now the company is investing in the casual footwear.

Despite this focus on modernity, both designers look to their respective brands' expansive archives for inspiration. For instance, Mr. Andrew has put his own spin on the classic Vara pump from Ferragamo, making the "gold mine" shoe new.

Heritage brands have to balance outreach to new clientele with retaining the label's existing audience.

Data also plays a significant role in growing the business, as does collaboration with executives on business strategy.

Tradition and innovation

Salvatore Ferragamo's spring/summer 2018 campaign makes a comparison between art and its apparel and accessories.

"The World is a Work of Art" features models posing against a backdrop of Italian masterworks, creating a link between the past and present. Released ahead of the debut of Mr. Andrew's first collection as head of Ferragamo's women's wear, the campaign highlights the need for both tradition and innovation ([see story](#)).

Understanding the relationship between heritage and innovation is the key to appealing to today's new consumer, according to panelists at the FACC Luxury Symposium in 2016.

Heritage brands have been successful for decades or centuries because within the heritage is a history of innovation around a core group of principles. While touting history could suggest to younger consumers that a brand is "old and stodgy" or the brand of their grandparents, focusing on innovating with products that appeal to today's consumers will let the puzzle pieces fall into place ([see story](#)).

"It was never going to be a mega revolution with Ferragamo," Mr. Andrew said. "It was always going to be—at least from my perspective—a hard evolution.

"It's taking so many of the elements—Ferragamo is 90 years old—and if you think about what he created when he was alive, it was just so ahead of the game," he said.

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