

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Cerruti turns agender dressing into romantic statement

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One of the looks from Cerruti 1881's Share Wardrobe effort. Image credit: Cerruti 1881

By SARAH JONES

French menswear label Cerruti 1881 is branching out into genderless fashion as consumers increasingly shop based on style rather than sex.

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Cerruti's #ShareWardrobe concept positions dressing as a couple's activity, prompting shoppers to share their love by mirroring their closets. While Cerruti has traditionally catered to men, the growing agender fashion sensibility has opened the door for the label to reach a wider consumer base.

"There is a need for companies to think about portions of their line that are gender neutral," said Kimmie Smith, celeb fashion stylist and cofounder, creative and style director of [Athleisure Mag](#), New York. "The need to have these elements in their collection comes at a time where couples are approaching the minimalist movement having items that they can wear interchangeably, people wanting items that are neutral in concept and that don't read to one gender versus the other and as a fashion stylist, having the ability to have great basics and staples that can be pulled for clients regardless of their gender is always nice to have at my disposal."

"Cerruti's neutral palette with options that have a pop of print showcases that they have achieved this element into this movement as well as showing the power of accessories to make it your own and showcases its versatility," she said.

Ms. Smith is not affiliated with Cerruti, but agreed to comment as an industry expert. [Cerruti](#) was reached for comment.

Apparel meets affection

Cerruti is launching #ShareWardrobe with a video manifesto.

The film features a man and a woman in a set that resembles a home. The male model asks the viewer, "Do you love her?" and his costar echos, "Do you love him?"

This is followed by shots of the pair in similar attire, such as funnel neck camel coats and printed blazers. Communicating the affection between the two, they pose lounging on a couch together or embracing.

The woman explains, "It's not about her or him," and the man continues, saying, "It's a person."

At the center of Cerruti's message is love. The brand set out to show that just as love can move beyond traditional gender barriers, so can attire.

Cerruti explains in a statement, "We finally realized that what's above roles, genders, and any other things, is love. The essence of style that stays in people's living forever."

Cerruti 1881's #ShareWardrobe

A second film finds a different male and female model strutting in the same fashions, from a pink coat to a geometric sweater. The film continuously bounces back and forth between footage of the man and the woman, bringing home the idea that gender does not have to divide fashion.

With this film, Cerruti suggests, "How about sharing your Cerruti 1881 wardrobe this season with your beloved one?"

Cerruti's strategy will enable the brand to potentially transform the women in its current customers' lives into wearers themselves. Women often shop for their significant others and family, and are potentially among Cerruti's existing social media audience.

"Share Wardrobe really leans towards the concept of the power couple that is so in sync with how they look at and attack their goals in life that the ultimate is to be able to wear their clothing without an issue to showcase their duality and their individuality," Ms. Smith said. "It makes like simple with choices that are based on appreciating a style that is convenient for both without having to worry about the fit being difficult to pull off."

Agender approach

Luxury fashion labels are increasingly breaking with tradition, bending the rules of gendered dressing through their designs and marketing.

From co-ed fashion shows and unisex collections to cross dressing in campaigns, brands are incorporating themselves into the larger conversation around gender identity ([see story](#)).

For instance, Italian apparel and accessories label Valentino got back to basics with a gender-neutral line of classic pieces.

To introduce the collection, named Rockstud Untitled, Valentino's creative directors at the time Maria Grazia Chiuri and Pierpaolo Piccioli worked with artist Vanessa Beecroft on a living performance piece. The lines are blurring between men's and women's fashions, opening up opportunities for brands to experiment with new design concepts ([see story](#)).

Often, menswear labels have an existing following of female shoppers, creating opportunities for more direct marketing.

For instance, U.S. leather goods maker Gurka introduced its first women's collection in more than 15 years with a campaign that centered on the relationship between a woman and her handbag.

The imagery, which ran in digital mediums as well as in a direct mail catalog, showed classically dressed women to represent the timeless appeal of the designs. At the time, Gurka had a female following but had not been speaking directly to them ([see story](#)).

"I think that brands that are known as menswear that have adopted a way to incorporate women's can really test whether they will expand this portion of the line or also create options with women in mind as well," Athleisure Mag's Ms. Smith said. "There is no reason why menswear, women's wear and agender can't be a staple that is offered from one season to the next."