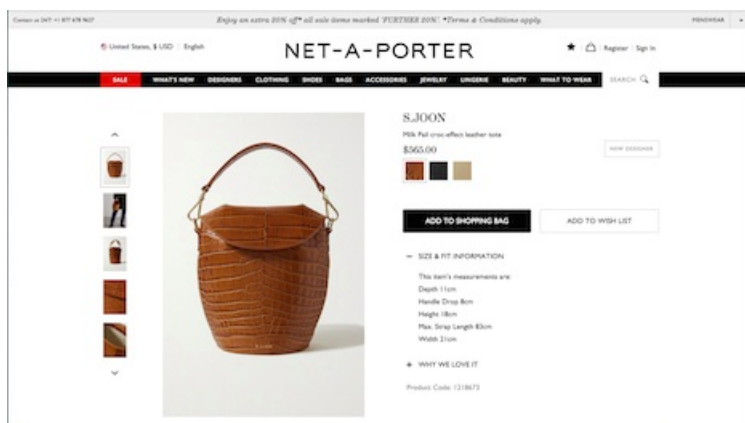


RETAIL

Net-A-Porter's Vanguard program for emerging designers identifies four more

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Vanguard program enrollee S. Joon's Milk Pail croc-effect leather tote on Net-A-Porter's site. Image credit: Net-A-Porter

By DIANNA DILWORTH

Online retailer Net-A-Porter welcomed four emerging fashion designers to The Vanguard, the Richemont-owned company's emerging designer showcase that recognizes unique design aesthetic and visual perspective.

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Four designers Christopher John Rogers, Gauchere, Ioannes and S. Joonhouses will be mentored by Net-A-Porter's team of specialists, with help for business development in a hardscrabble fashion market. In exchange, they will let Net-A-Porter have exclusive access to their spring/summer 2020 collections.

"Each season we truly search for the best of new emerging talent," said Elizabeth von der Goltz, global buying director at Net-A-Porter, New York. "We see so many new collections, so it is a very thoughtful decision to choose who to bring into our Vanguard program."

"Each designer for the fourth season really stood out from anything new we saw out in the market," Ms. Goltz said. "Each brand is unique in its own way and also have a signature style, that we foresee evolving and developing for many years to come."

Net-A-Porter is one of the leading ecommerce platforms for luxury and fashion goods worldwide, competing with Matchesfashion, Farfetch, Moda Operandi, department stores' online efforts and luxury labels' own direct-to-consumer operations.



Ioannes' Camie floral-print stretch-jersey mini dress on Net-A-Porter. Image credit: Net-A-Porter

Cross-business support

Since its September 2018 launch, Net-A-Porter's The Vanguard program has embraced 16 young brands into its folds. Keeping its end of the bargain for this batch, Net-A-Porter will serve as a mentor, giving each brand advice from across the company.

Net-A-Porter's president, legal team, marketing department, public relations division and social media department will be at their disposal for advice. These Vanguard designers can also make use of Net-A-Porter's studios.

"They have our entire organization at their fingertips," Ms. Goltz said.

"For each brand they are able to come to us to learn as much as they want," she said. "In just the on-boarding process alone, they need to know how to ship to three of our global warehouses."



Christopher John Rogers Ruched Wiggle Dress. Image courtesy of Net-A-Porter

For Net-A-Porter, supporting emerging designers will ensure that the company has priority access to brands that take off.

The company also sees itself as a purveyor of fine fashion and a mentor to designers looking to take their businesses to the next level and keep it there.

"We want to ensure the future of fashion," Ms. Goltz said. "We see so many brands launch, but then have the challenges of how to grow and sustain their businesses."

"Sadly, many new emerging brands don't last," she said.

"For Net-A-Porter, it's about helping new designers know how to navigate the fashion industry and to be able to develop a strong operational base in order for their creativity to flourish and their businesses to succeed. These are the designers of the future."

Making it

Christopher John Rogers recently won the prestigious CFDA Vogue fashion fund award. The Brooklyn-based designer is known for his vibrant colors, and opulent and dramatic silhouettes.

"He is a young designer with a couture hand and aesthetic, which is incredibly rare these days," Ms. Goltz said.



Gauchere shirt. Image courtesy of Net-A-Porter

Paris-based Gauchere is the brainchild of designer Marie-Christine Statz.

While studying at New York's Parsons School of Design, her teacher nicknamed her La Gauchere, left-handed in French. The line stands out for its minimalist feel, with clean-lined silhouettes and a muted color palette.

"It is so modern and chic," Ms. Goltz said. "We loved Marie-Christine's minimalistic approach that still feels different and special."

Paris-based Ioannes stands out for its sophisticated lines mixed with a quirky edge. The designer gravitates between its modern signature slip dresses and Japanese cherry blossom-inspired prints.

"Ioannes provides a young and modern approach to simple slip dresses and barely-there knits," Ms. Goltz said.

"And all prints hand [are] designed in their Paris atelier. We love the attitude and coolness of this new brand."

S. Joon brings luxury handbags to the Vanguard group.

Taking its name from founder Sahar Asvandi's first initial and a Persian term of endearment, the design house creates classic handbags with unique sculptural silhouettes.

"S. Joon brings Italian-made bags that are defined by very distinctive shapes, but with a truly sophisticated aesthetic, which we believe carries that it-bag factor but balances it with something more timeless and classic," Ms. Goltz said.

Each participant in the program was hand selected for its uniqueness and originality.

With this effort, Net-A-Porter is hoping to tap the visionaries of the future, and not simply stock designers following the current zeitgeist.

"We actually love how these brands don't follow the market trends," Ms. Goltz said. "They stand apart and beat to their own design drums."

"This is what attracted us to them and why they are in the Vanguard program," she said.

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