

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Maison Atia delights in pushing boundaries of faux fur

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Chloe Medel, creative director and cofounder of Maison Atia alongside brand cocreator Gustave Maisonrouge. Image courtesy of Maison Atia

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As many luxury fashion houses are abandoning their use of fur, luxury faux fur brand Maison Atia is reminding consumers of a sustainable, ethical alternative.

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Founded in 2017, **Maison Atia** has evolved as a go-to source for chic faux-fur, while promoting its ecommerce presence and in-person events and fostering support for various community and animal advocacy initiatives. Fresh off a preview of the autumn/winter 2022 collection with an in-person showcase for New York Fashion Week at the Baccarat Hotel, Maison Atia's creative director and cofounder Chloe Mendel and cofounder Gustave Maisonrouge are ruminating on the brand's sustainable heritage and hopes for the future.

"These coats are designed to be worn over anything to dress up one's look because I believe that a beautiful coat makes the outfit," Ms. Mendel said. "It is very exciting for me to elevate and push the boundaries of what faux fur can look and feel like."

In this Q&A, Ms. Mendel and Mr. Maisonrouge discuss Maison Atia's base in sustainability, 1990s influences on the new collection and hopes for what comes next. Here is the dialogue:

How does Maison Atia set itself apart?

CM: Maison Atia is a heritage brand. I come from a lineage of furriers and grew up within the J.Mendel atelier.

Working with the finest craftsmen making furs is a part of my DNA, but today we apply the same techniques and principles to faux fur.

What sets us apart from any other brand is the marriage of sustainability with craftsmanship. We are committed to sustainability from the ground up. Starting with the materials we chose we work with **KOBA** and biobased fabric, recycled materials and deadstock vintage fabrics all the way to production where we run a zero-to-no-waste' production model saving all of the scraps after making coats to produce accessories.

Finally, any small fabric pieces that are left would be donated to **Fab Scrap** and used to make insulation.

What would you say were some of the most prominent influences for your new collection?

CM: When designing the collection, I imagined Naomi Campbell, Cindy Crawford, Linda Evangelista and Christy Turlington on a fabulous ski weekend together. Dressed to the nines for ski, apres ski and then dinner and parties, I wanted to pay homage to high fashion in the early '90s with bold shoulders and houndstooth jacquard fabrics weaving throughout the collection.



The Celeste Collarless Jacket and Catherine Ray coat. Image credit: Maison Atia

We know that Ms. Mendel was born into the fashion world and that Mr. Maisonrouge started at Hermès. Both of you have immense fashion experience, but I wanted to ask did you both always know you wanted to build a label built on sustainability and animal advocacy?

GM: As individuals, Chloe and I are both animal lovers and have been keenly aware of the environmental and sustainable challenges that our planet is facing. We wanted our brand to reflect our values in a real, meaningful way that was true to who we are.

Chloe had already adopted a number of pets from Paws Chicago, so working with them was the obvious choice for us.

We also wanted to contribute from the start, as we knew that giving a percentage of our profits would mean not contributing much for quite some time. Hence, our #BuyACoatSaveAPuppy campaign allowed us to support this great organization the moment we launched.

When we created Maison Atia in 2017, our commitment to sustainability in the field of faux fur was an uphill battle. At the time, most faux fur materials we could find were blends of acrylic and modacrylic polymers which are less biodegradable than real fur.

Our road to being fully sustainable started with aiming to be zero waste, using all fabric leftover from coat production to create chic accessories, which requires a lot more time and talent we were aiming high as we looked at Petit H as our role model.

As Chloe shared, we reached out to FabScrap before our launch and worked with them on the right way to recycle leftovers. We continued our hunt for sustainable materials, and I traveled to France, Italy, Germany, Turkey, Korea, Vietnam and China to meet with manufacturers.

We were thrilled when Ecopel launched the Koba fabric and immediately launched our first fully sustainable capsule collection for babies and toddlers in fall 2019. Since 2021, our collections are either made from sustainable materials or vintage stock, and that's where the immense creative talent of Chloe and her design shine and make Maison Atia stand out.

What is one style or look from the collection you are both especially excited about?

CM: The Stella coat. This faux fur piece is black and white houndstooth-shaped cuttings of long hair faux fur, which degrades from small to large scale.

It is made of 450 individual pattern pieces which are then hand sewn and mounted onto organza in order to create this beautiful whimsical effect; this is true haute faux fur. They are statement pieces that truly reflect Maison Atia's commitment to craftsmanship.

What do you think the future of Maison Atia holds? What is something you would like to do next?

GM: Using Chloe's family heritage, Maison Atia has established itself in a short time as a leader in sustainable quality faux fur. We'll continue to build up our home offerings. We now aim to translate our values into other categories, keeping our commitment to being 100 percent fully sustainable and translating our DNA rooted in craftsmanship in all our creations. We started this journey last year with rainwear, and we'll continue to expand into outerwear.

Long term, we would like to be a lifestyle brand, and we feel that the right way to do it is by taking small steps, testing and adjusting as we go along. We learned so much in our first five years and we are proud to have stayed true to ourselves and have never compromised on our values.

I believe in evolution and not revolution from a branding perspective; seeing that our clients keep coming back to Maison Atia for more makes us feel that we are on the right track.

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