

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Chinese designer collaborations are a must for global brands

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Angel Chen's collaboration with Canada Goose attracted press attention worldwide. Image credit: Canada Goose

By [Jing Daily](#)

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Recent years have seen a number of fashion brands tapping emerging and established Chinese designers for special collections or products.

For brands, the benefits of leveraging these individuals are twofold.

First, the ability to entice new consumer bases, for some popular designers, can equate to millions of social media followers.

Second, established global brands can tap young and fashion-savvy audiences, while domestic Chinese brands can instantly burnish their design and quality credentials.

In many cases, international brands are partnering with Chinese designers who are educated or based in Western countries, who offer and often heavily promote an "East Meets West" design aesthetic.

One Chinese designer who is one of the most prolific brand collaborators is Shenzhen-born, Central Saint Martins-educated Angel Chen, who after founding her eponymous designer brand in 2014 has collaborated with names such as H&M, Adidas Originals, M.A.C, Urban Outfitters and [Canada Goose](#).

In January 2022, Ms. Chen teamed up with Japanese beauty powerhouse Shiseido to launch special-edition packaging of the brand's Ultimune, Vital Perfection and Future Solution serums.

As Juliette Dubeau, founder of marketing consultancy Chinese Pulse, noted of the collaboration, Shiseido aimed "to connect to Chinese contemporary creativity, and position itself to be more fashionably trendy" by working with Ms. Chen, adding that the brand was "looking to get closer to China's Gen Z and the local creative communities."

Despite a relatively low-key marketing rollout that consisted of just eight organic posts on Weibo, the campaign

reached an estimated 3 million users, with two items selling out in rapid succession and the others low in stock within days of the launch.

One reason that major brands are turning to Chinese designers is for their ability to influence younger Chinese millennial and Gen Z consumers, two demographics who have proven interested in global luxury as well as local **Guochao** ("national trend") products and brands.

Incorporating traditional design and cultural cues, guochao exemplifies the nationalist streak that motivates Chinese consumer purchases and brands have taken note.

Working with often, but not always, internationally trained Chinese designers is also a way to bridge global markets, infusing a design sensibility that often proves as attractive to Chinese consumers as it does to consumers in North America and Europe.

In April and November 2021, American footwear brand UGG tapped another London-based Chinese brand, **Feng Chen Wang**, to put its spin on two collections reimagining UGG's Classic Boot and Fluff Sandal silhouettes.

As UGG president Andrea O'Donnell said of the collaboration, "Fengchen Wang is known for her thought-provoking take on deconstruction," adding that Ms. Wang "reinterpreted [UGG's] iconic Classic boot so that it can be worn throughout the year on the streets of Shanghai and the beaches in California."

UGG's collaboration with the brand was a social media success in China, driving 271,855 total engagements across Weibo, WeChat and Xiaohongshu across 149 days a relative eternity for a brand campaign in China according to ReHub data.

For reference, ReHub found that the Gucci x Marsper campaign of December 2021 saw engagement dry up after just nine days.

Ms. Wang has proven arguably the most popular Chinese designer for brand collaborations, racking up a number of high-profile partnerships with the likes of Converse, Levi's, Nike Lab, Air Jordan, the Beijing Olympics and Italian vehicle manufacturer Piaggio.

But what exactly is it about this particular designer that has made her such a popular collaborator?

Ms. Wang's diverse array of collaborations points to her multidisciplinary design focus, which includes but is not limited to fashion.

As Ms. Wang points out, "I've never thought of myself as solely a fashion designer, and I think in the future that Feng Chen Wang won't just be a clothing brand, [either]. That's one of the reasons why I collaborate with so many interesting and different brands, including some which are more lifestyle. In my design philosophy, design should be diversified and should be a part of art."

The label's design DNA which typically includes Chinese design references but with clear international appeal also reflects the type of sensibility preferred by global brands when launching a collaboration that may have one eye towards China but another towards other major global markets.

Ms. Wang's **collaboration with Piaggio** on the manufacturer's first e-scooter, for example, featured a Chinese painting-inspired colorway that would be instantly recognized by Chinese consumers but could simply appear as an abstract pattern elsewhere.

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